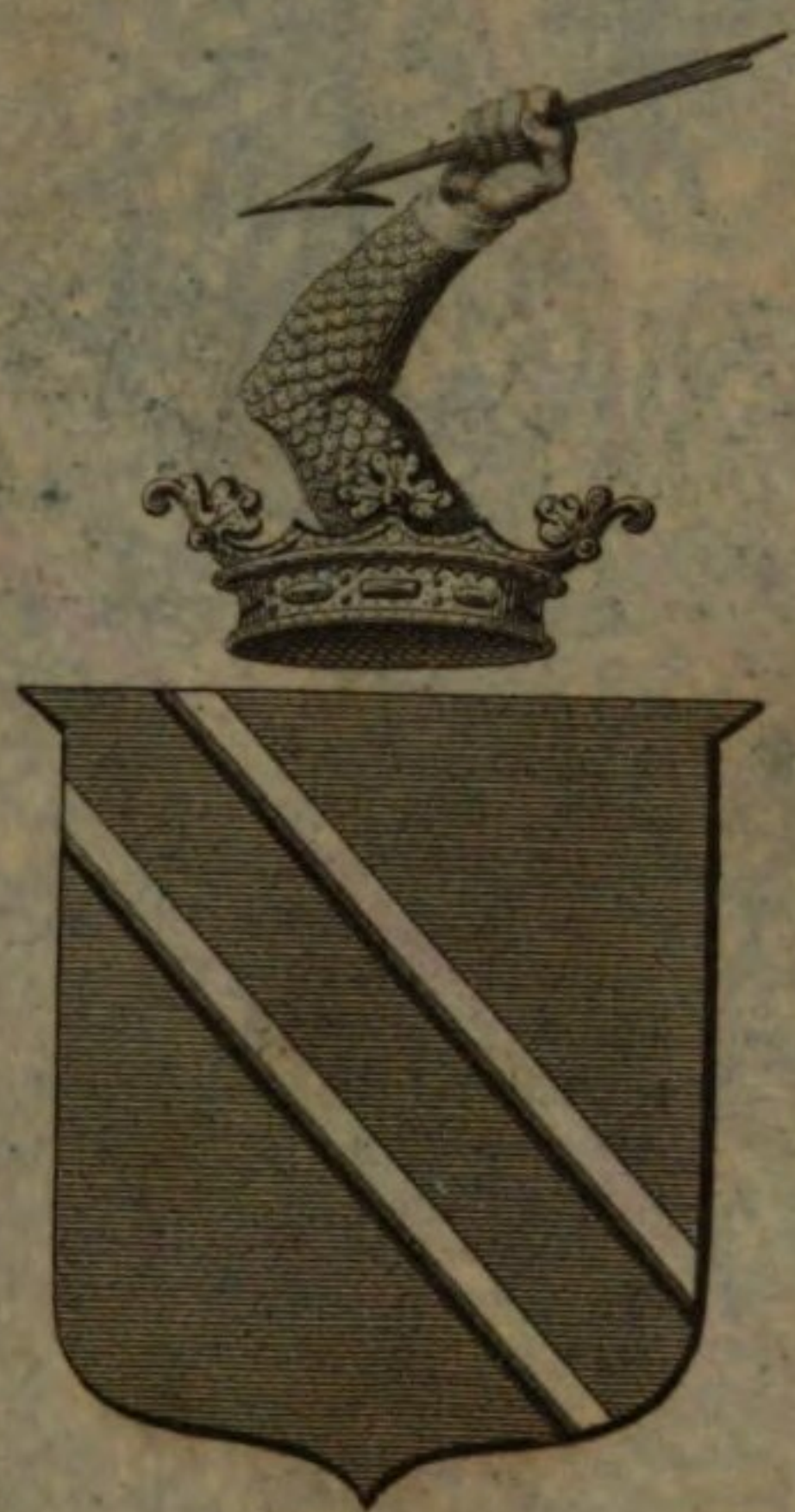


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John Litchfield.



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O N S O M E
O F T H E A N C I E N T
E N G L I S H P O E T S,
P A R T I C U L A R L Y
M I L T O N.

By Ph. Hume Esq

~~~~~  
*Veritatis studium, ut solus stimulus, ita et scopus unicus.*

*Minutula tamen sunt, quæ si non hunc, alium scire juvet.*

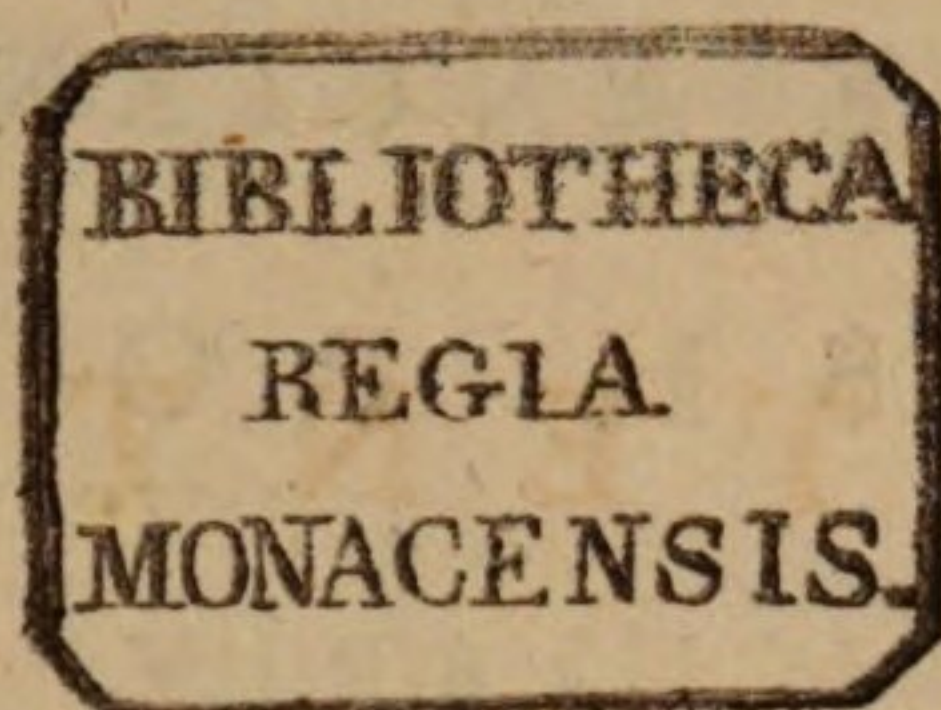
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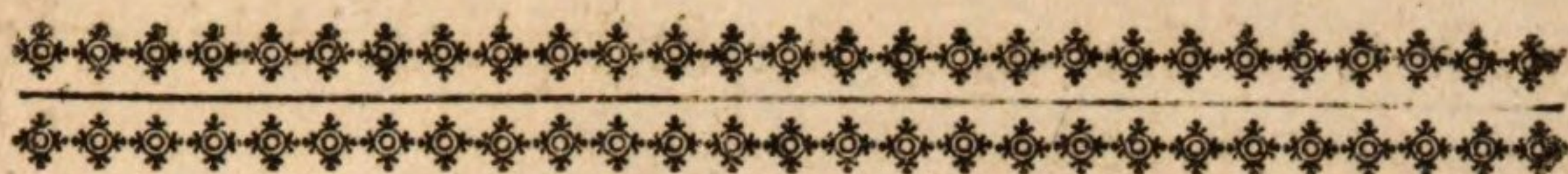
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# CHAUCE R.

**C**HAUCE R, who was born in 1328,  
 from the long age that intervened be-  
 tween him and any other poet of reputa-  
 tion, seems entitled to a great share of that  
 fame, as father of the *English* muse, which  
*Homer* enjoys, as father of the *Grecian*. The  
 one had (as is generally believed) his con-  
 temporary, *Hesiod*; and the other, *Gower*;  
 and, though the uncertain date of *Gower's*  
 birth be, by some, placed seven or eight years  
 before that of *Chaucer*, and he had written  
 his great work, the *Confessio Amantis*, before  
*Chaucer* had published his *Canterbury Tales*,  
 yet the general voice of every class of readers  
 has consented to give *Chaucer*, among the  
 B writers



writers of that age, the first place in his own *House of Fame*.

Of the seniority of *Homer*, or *Hesiod*, though it be a matter quite extraneous to the subject of English Poets, it may not be improper to point out, that the text of *Hesiod's Theogony* seems to afford sufficient proof, that he had at least seen *Homer's* writings, before he composed that work: for, in enumerating there twenty-five rivers, the offspring of *Oceanus* and *Tethys*, those two of them only, which wash the *Trojan* plain, are called, *Ἰδιόι*, divine. Now, the *Isther*, the *Eridanus*, and the *Nile* being among them, and, of course, of the same origin as the *Simoïs* and *Scamander*, it would be very remarkable, that these two latter only should be divine, and yet not receive their divinity from the *Ilias*.

The *general Prologue* is justly the most celebrated part of *Chaucer's* works. The acuteness of his observation, his judgment, and discrimination of character are there alike conspicuous. Nor is it wonderful, that a  
mind



mind, possessing much native humour, and enriched by long experience and extensive information, should exhibit characters, such as are there found, with striking resemblance to nature and living manners.

*Chaucer*, for the time when he wrote, was a very learned, and a very powerful master in his art. When he began his *Canterbury Tales*, English could scarcely be called the predominant language of the country. French was yet used in all publick proceedings; and also in schools, as the language, into which the *Classics* were construed. To enrich his English style, therefore, he consulted the best foreign sources. With the graces of the *Provençal* poetry all *Europe* was then in admiration: and he not only adopted words and phraseology from that dialect; but, from a close study of *Dante's* sublimity, the elegance of *Petrarca*, and the style and manners of *Boccaccio*, he gained copiousness, harmony, and whatever was formed to give poetical expression.



Of his metres, some were originally his own, and others by him first introduced into our language, from the *Provençal*: in the former of which, he has (with a small alteration) been followed by *Spenser*; and, in the latter, by *Milton*.

In the *Second Nonnes Tale*, Chaucer has taken three stanzas together from the beginning of the 33d Canto of Dante's *Paradiso*; which copy from the Italian remains, as yet, unnoticed by his commentators.

Dr. *Johnson* has said of *Chaucer*, "that he  
" was the first English versifier, who wrote  
" poetically." An expression, taken from that excellent treatise, *The Defense of Poesy*, by Sir *Philip Sidney*; who says, "one may be a  
" poet, without versing, and a versifier,  
" without poetry."

The *Canterbury Tales*, by which *Chaucer* is more generally known as a poet, were the works of his latest years: at the earliest, not begun before 1382, his 54th year; nor much advanced before 1389, his 61st. The  
last



last historical fact, mentioned in them, is the death of *Barnardo Visconti*, Duke of *Milan*, who died in prison, in 1385.

Of these Tales, it is much lamented by every reader, that six are entirely wanting, and some others left imperfect. Amongst his other poems, *The Rhyme of Sir Thopas*, the first poetical satire in our language, stands a perpetual monument of his taste; and *Troilus*, or *The House of Fame*, had singly been sufficient to secure his name to posterity. The latter of which, and some of his tales, and other pieces, have excited the imitation of two of our greatest latter poets, *Dryden* and *Pope*.

Against his diction, his uncouth and obsolete terms (as they are called), the general prejudice is unreasonably strong. *Chaucer* is not now what he was, before the year 1775. In that year, Mr. *Tyrwhitt*, a gentleman, who can never be named, without respect and gratitude, by any scholar, or reader of *Chaucer*, published the *Canterbury Tales*, with a Glossary, Notes, and Illustrations, executed with



## 6 C H A U C E R.

method, acumen, and perspicuity, no where exceeded, among all the commentators on books. In this edition, the text is published in its original purity; and a reader, to go through with it, has only to consult his faithful guide, the editor; who will equally amuse and instruct him, on the pilgrimage. Of corruptions in the text of *Chaucer*, every page, sentence, almost every line would afford example, before the publication of this edition. To take the instance, which offers itself most readily to those, who have not at hand the different editions of *Chaucer* to compare; that couplet of *Pope*, in his Epistle of *Eloisa to Abelard*,

Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,  
Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies—

is taken from Chaucer's *Frankleines Tale*,

Love wol not be *constreined* by maistrie.  
Whan maistrie cometh, the *God* of Love anon  
*Beteth* his winges, and, *farewel*, he is gon.

Bishop *Warburton*, in his notes on *Pope*, has quoted these lines of *Chaucer*, from that vile  
edition,



edition, published by Mr. Urry; and they stand,

Love will not be *confin'd* by maisterie:  
When maisterie comes, the *Lord* of Love anon  
*Flutters* his wings, and *forthwith* is he gone.—

by which it is seen, that, in three lines, are four words, which do not belong to *Chaucer*.

If in any one passage, or even couplet, the harmony and flow of this antient poet's lines will stand in compare with those, from the polished pen of *Dryden*, he is not surely to be called "obsolete." In the *Knights Tale*, he describes the morning,

The besy larke, the messenger of day,  
Saleweth in hire song the morwe gray;  
And firy Phebus riseth up so bright,  
That all the orient laugheth of the fight,  
And with his strēmēs drieth in the greves  
The silver drōpēs, hanging on the leves.

which lines *Dryden* renders,

The *morning* lark, the messenger of day,  
Saluteth in her song the *morning* gray;



And soon the sun arose with beams so bright,  
*That all th' horizon laugh'd to see the joyous sight;*  
 He with his tepid rays the rose renews,  
 And licks the drooping leaves, and dries the dews.

In *Dryden's* verses, the double use of "*morning*," in the first couplet; the ragged alexandrine, in the second; and the *Pierce-Plowman*-like alliteration, in both the verses of the third, seem to leave the point of harmony (to any one who will so far accustom himself to *Chaucer's* words, as not to hesitate in pronouncing them) entirely in favor of the old poet. In the *Oxenforde Clerkes Prologue*, he writes,

Souning in moral vertue was his speche,  
 And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

As to the moral purity of *Chaucer's* writings; if, in an age when we live in all the refinements of polished life, and are accustomed to expect a general chastity of manners, we can form to ourselves a true picture of the manners of the reigns of *Edward III.* and *Richard II.*; if we shall find, the year only  
 before



before *Chaucer* was born, that a play was acted, in one of the principal cities of *England*, under the direction of the trading companies of that city, before a numerous assembly of both sexes, wherein *Adam* and *Eve* appeared on the stage entirely naked, and performed their whole part in the representation of *Eden*, to the serpent's temptation, to the eating of the forbidden fruit, the perceiving of and conversing about their nakedness, and to the supplying of fig-leaves to cover it; we shall have reason, from his writings, to call *Chaucer*, not loose and indelicate, but chaste, discreet, and moderate.

*Chaucer* was contemporary with *Petrarca* and *Boccaccio*; the former of whom died in 1374; the latter, in 1375: *Chaucer* not till 1400. These two Italians were the immediate successors of *Dante*. “Quando *Dante*  
 “ morì, *Il Petrarca* era di età di anni die-  
 “ cisetete; e quando morì *Il Petrarca*, era  
 “ *Il Boccaccio* di minore età di lui anni  
 “ nove: e così per successione andarono le  
 “ muse.





## S K E L T O N.

**J**OHNSKELTON, a rude and scurrilous rhymmer of the reign of *Henry VIII.* is mentioned here, only as his gross style and measures reflect back some honor to *Chaucer*, by a comparison: and he seems further remarkable, as he had sufficient confidence to satirize *Wolfey*, in the plenitude of his power. *Puttenham*, whose valuable book contains a treasure of poetical and historical anecdotes, calls him “a rude rayling rhymmer, “and all his doings ridiculous.” Yet he was this for want of taste, not learning; as his scholarship excited a high encomium from *Erasmus*.

Though neither the manner, nor versification of *Skelton*, could recommend his poems, the justness of his satire rendered them popular. *Wolfey*’s profligacy, arrogance, and oppressions



pressions were so excessive, that it required a very ingenious poet to invent a charge against him, that would not have application : and the generality of the court, constrained, through fear, to flatter a man they secretly detested, were gratified in the boldness of one, who, without hesitation or reserve, dared utter their common sentiment. His humorous picture of *Wolsey* at a council-board, in the poem, *Why come ye not to Court,*

Then in the chambre of stars  
 All matters there he mars.  
*Clapping his rod on the borde,*  
*No man dare speak a word ;*  
*For he hath all the saying,*  
*Without any renaying.*  
 He rolleth in his recordes ;  
*He saith—" How say ye, my Lordes,*  
*" Is not my reason good ?"*  
 Good, even good, Robin Hood.  
*Some say, yes ; and some*  
*Sit still as they were dome—*

had



had probably much truth in it; as the 15th article of the charges, preferred against *Wolsey* in the parliament of 1529, sets forth,  
“ That the said Lord *Cardinal*, sitting among  
“ the Lords, and other of your Majesty’s  
“ most honorable Council, used himself, that  
“ *if any many would shew his mind according*  
“ *to his duty, contrary to the opinion of the*  
“ *said Cardinal, he would so take him up with*  
“ *his accustomable words, that they were bet-*  
“ *ter to hold their peace than to speak; so*  
“ *that he would hear no man speak, but one or*  
“ *two great personages; so that he would have*  
“ *all the words himself, and consumed much*  
“ *time with a fair tale.*”



32

\*\*\*\*\*

EARL OF SURREY'S POEMS.

**I**N the last year of Queen *Mary*, ten years after the death of *Henry Howard*, Earl of *Surrey*, was published a volume of miscellaneous poems, by that Earl, Sir *Thomas Wyatt* the elder, and others.

The Earl of *Surrey* is usually celebrated, as the first introducer of blank verse into our language, by his translation of two books of the *Æneis*; and the testimony of *Ascham* seems to confirm the opinion. At the end of this Miscellany, however, are found two pieces, of considerable length and force, on the deaths of *Zoroaster* and *Cicero*, also in blank verse, by *N. G.*; who was at least contemporary with *Surrey*. The cause of polite letters, doubtless, suffered much, in the untimely death of this learned and accomplished Earl; who little thought he was  
writing



14 SURREY, WYAT, &c.

writing his own epitaph, when he paraphrased,  
from *Virgil's* 2d book,

Quæ causa indigna ferenos  
Fœdavit vultus, aut cur hæc vulnera cerno ?

Sir Thomas *Wyat* has been justly ranked  
our *first* polished satirist. Nor will it be  
amiss here to detract, in some measure, from  
that importance, which Bishop *Hall* has arro-  
gated to himself, in his *Prologue*, where he  
says,

*I first* adventure, follow me who list,  
And dare to be *the second* satirist.—

for he was himself undoubtedly but *the se-  
cond*. *Puttenham* says, “Before Sir Thomas  
“ *Wyat's* time, alexandrines were not used in  
“ our vulgar.”

This volume, the first printed *Miscellany*  
in our language, contains a variety of tran-  
slations from *Petrarca* ; some from *Ariosto* ;  
many original pieces ; and also the earliest  
English Pastoral, called *Harpalus' Complaint*.

Pastoral



Pastoral sketches are drawn from those, who live, according to the simplicity of nature, without artificial cares and refinements. To such, however, neither the nicest sensations, nor the justest sentiments are denied; but they must be simply expressed: and care must be had, that the scenery be not unfitted to the characters, nor the images to the scenery; or the images must, at least, bear strong and intimate allusion to rural manners. If this be a just delineation of pastoral, *Harpalus' Complaint*, as it greatly precedes Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* in time, must also take place of it in estimation.

Among the *Sonnets*, found in this volume, it is necessary carefully to distinguish those, translated from *Petrarca*, (of which no notice is given in the titles); as a reader may, otherwise, easily be led into mistake, respecting the authors. See particularly, in the Earl of Surrey's part, that taken from *Petrarca's* first *Canzone*.

The



The republication of these Poems, in 1717, is perhaps the most incorrect book in the language: but of this information few will be able to avail themselves; as the original editions are among the scarcest books in English literature.





## S P E N S E R.

**O**F *Spenser*, who was born about 1555, it seems to be the fate now, as it was in his life-time, to be at once admired and neglected. A life, carefully drawn out from the most authentic memorials, though these be but scanty, together with a minute investigation of the common-places of his reading and study, is the great desideratum of poetical history. To those, who are acquainted with the *Remarks* of the late learned Dr. *Fortin*, and the *Observations* of the ingenious author of the *History of English Poetry*, this opinion might appear reprehensible, if it were not easy, at once, to point out seventy-eight lines in the second book of the *Faery Queen*, and twenty-two lines in the sixth book, immediately copied from *Tasso*, and of which no notice is taken by either of those commen-

C

tators.



tators. In *Hughes's* edition, the only general collection of *Spenser's* works, the partial and deficient publication of the Letters is well known. But this is a work, from which all biographers, capable of the task, have shrunk; whether discouraged by the large field of romance to be explored; the extent of research among the Italian poets; or the few certain facts, to be now ascertained, about the author personally.

In all *Spenser's* writings learning and genius are conspicuous: but he submitted, with too much servility, to the fashion of his age, in the prevailing love and deference for all that was Italian. Exactly in that proportion, in which the English have been approximating to, and forming themselves upon *French* manners, since the return of *Charles II.* were they inclining to, and copying those of *Italy*, in the days of *Elizabeth*: and so epidemical was this infection, that the greatest powers of mind, strengthened by the best institution of academical education, did not,  
in



in *Spenser*, afford a sufficient antidote against it. From *Ariosto* chiefly; from *Tasso*, Bruno's *Spaccio della bestia trionfante*, the *Ceiris* (attributed to Virgil), the *Apocalypse*; and the fashionable romances of his time (the offspring of those universal sources of the marvellous, *Turpin* and *Geoffrey of Monmouth*) *Spenser* constructed his *Faery-Queen*.

The rule, by which *Ariosto* wrote, is found in his own text,

Come raccende il gusto il mutar esca,  
Così mi par che la mia Istoria, quanto  
Or quà, or là più variata fia,  
Meno a chi l'udirà noiosa fia.

C. 13. St. 80.

a rule, of which *Spenser* seems, in some sort, to have availed himself, in the institution, as also in the conduct of his poem; for in the latter he has not pursued the scheme, laid down in his Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh. Nor are the opinions of *Dryden* and *Hughes* to be regarded, by readers of the



*Faery-Queen*; the first being untrue, according to the action, exhibited in the several books; and the latter shewing only, that the author varied from his own design.

Of some poets, by following the traces of others, the genius is obscured; as is the case with *Spenser*. Of others it is, by the same means, illustrated; as is the case with *Milton*. *Spenser* obscures himself by imitations, because he is satisfied with what he finds: *Milton* rises by comparisons, because he will always exceed his original. This position is obvious every where, in the works of the latter poet: and, if it be enquired how what is said of *Spenser* can be proved; his works, where they are original, shew, that he possessed energy, copiousness, and sublimity sufficient, had he taken no model to follow, to have produced a poem, that would rank him with *Homer*, *Tasso*, and *Milton*; for his greatest excellence is in those images, which are the immediate foundation



tion of the sublime. Fear, confusion, and astonishment, are delineated by him, with a most masterly pen.

Of his smaller poems, those several *Sonnets*, which accompanied the different presentation-copies of his *Faery-Queen*, to the nobility and ladies, his patrons in the Queen *Elizabeth's* court, are very distinguishable, in a mode of writing, not of the easiest sort; as it requires great delicacy, both of sentiment and expression. *Muiopotmos*, though the subject be a butterfly, holds a high rank among the beauties of *Spenser*. The *Epithalamium*, made on his own marriage, which he (having but a poet's wealth) prettily calls,

Song made in lieu of many ornaments,

With which my love should duly have been deckt,

is replete with genius, and refined sentiments; and the great beauties of description, which it exhibits, might well supply the place of a thousand baubles and trinkets on



the occasion. The *Britain's Ida*, it seems agreed, was not written by *Spenser*. It appears to have been suggested by Tasso's *Aminta*; and is composed with great ease and elegance. The song of the enchanting voice, *Enjoy, while yet thou may'st, thy life's sweet treasure, &c.* seems taken from that beautiful stanza of the Italian poet, in the description of *Armida's* garden, *Deh mira! &c.*: and, if there were any other arguments for this poem being *Spenser's*, this circumstance would greatly corroborate them; as, in the 2d book of the *Faery-Queen*, the translation from Tasso, in the above description of the garden, is the most labored of all his copies from the Italian poets.

*Spenser* was a professed follower of *Chaucer's* phraseology: but he seems to have taken more liberty with the language, than any of his contemporary poets; or even than *Chaucer* did, with the language of his time. This observation regards *Spenser* more particularly,



larly, as to his usage in the production, or abbreviation of known words, and his introduction of factitious ones, than as to his adoption of classic, or foreign terms, or idioms: though, of these latter, instances enough might readily be found. *Crumenal*, *singults*, *concrew*, *'sdeign'd*, &c. &c. shew at once their origin.

His Faery-mythology, and antient British genealogy, both necessary to be understood by those, who interest themselves in the stories of early British times, have been followed by all his successors. And *Milton*, no incurious searcher into the most fabulous antiquity of British story, has paid all deference to his deductions.

Three original pieces of *Spenser* yet remain, uncollected in the edition of his works.

An *Iambicke Elegie*, called "Love's Embassie;" in "*Davison's Poems*, or Po-



“etical Rhapsodie, by divers authors.”  
12<sup>mo</sup>, Lond. 1602.

A commendatory Sonnet, prefixed to “*Lew-  
kenor’s* Translation of Cardinal Gas-  
par *Contarini’s* Commonwealth and  
Government of *Venice*,” 4<sup>to</sup>, Lond.  
1599.

both which are reprinted in the *Observations*  
on *Spenser*, 1762.

And the following *Commendatory Sonnet*,  
here first reprinted, from “the Tran-  
slation, by Z. I., of *De Lavardin’s*  
History of *Scanderbeg*.” Fol. Lond.  
1596.

Upon the Historie of *George Castriot*, alias  
*Scanderbeg*, King of the Epirots, translated  
into English.

Wherefore doth vaine Antiquitie so vaunt  
Her ancient monuments of mighty peeres,  
And old herōes, which their world did daunt  
With their great deedes, and filld their chil-  
dren’s eares?

Who,



Who, rapt with wonder of their famous praise,  
 Admire their statues, their colossoes great,  
 Their rich triumphal arcks, which they did raise,  
 Their huge pyramids, which do heaven threat.  
 Lo one, whom later age hath brought to light,  
 Matchable to the greatest of those great;  
 Great both by name, and great in power and might,  
 And meriting a ' meere triumphant feat.  
 The scourge of Turkes, and plague of Infidels,  
 Thy acts, O *Scanderbeg*, this volume tels.

*Ed. Spenser.*

' *i. e.* absolute.

" I am a *meere* gentlewoman."

*Dekker's Satiromastix.*

" ——— things rank and gross in nature

" Possess it *meerely*.

*Hamlet.*





## O V E R B U R Y.

SIR *Thomas Overbury* was the son of *Nicholas Overbury*, Esquire, of *Burton*, in *Glostershire*. In 1595, his 14th year, he became Gent. Com. of Queen's, *Oxford*; and, in 1598, A. B. For some time he resided in the *Middle Temple*; and then went abroad. On his return, he became intimate with K. *James's* favorite, Sir Robert *Carre*, (afterwads Earl of *Somerset*); and, when *Carre* informed him of his design to marry the Countess of *Essex*, dissuaded him from it, with some imputations on the Countess' chastity. When *Carre* communicated to her *Overbury's* intelligence, she, with a refinement of malice, procured *Overbury* to be appointed to a foreign embassy; at the same time prompting *Carre* to dissuade him from accepting it, to the intent that he might offend the King.

*Overbury,*



## O V E R B U R Y. 27

*Overbury*, rejecting the appointment, was, 21st April 1613, committed to the *Tower*; and there, by a confederacy of *Carre* and the Countess, Sir Gervas *Yelvis* (Lieutenant of the Tower), *Anne Turner*, *Franklin*, *Weston*, and an apothecary, poisoned, the October following.

In *Overbury's* poem, *The Wife*, the sentiments, maxims, and observations, with which it abounds, are such as a considerable experience, and a correct judgment on mankind alone could furnish. The topics of jealousy, and of the credit, and behaviour of women are treated with great truth, delicacy, and perspicuity. The nice distinctions of moral character, and the pattern of female excellence here drawn, contrasted, as they were, with the heinous and flagrant enormities of the Countess of *Essex*, rendered this poem extremely popular, when its ingenious author was no more. From the first year of its publication, in 1614, to the year 1622, it went through eleven impressions; and is, in  
that



that latter edition, celebrated by twenty-five copies of commendatory verses; amongst which, two, from the initials, and the general satire on the sex, appear to be by *Fletcher*.

In Overbury's *Characters* are some of the manners of the times preserved, with very just delineation; as the *Courtier*, the *Affectate Traveller*, &c. And the *Wise-Man*, the *Old-Man*, and others, are drawn with considerable force of description.





## S H A K S P E A R E.

**T**HE works of *Shakspeare* have, for many years past, been so much the subject of research and study to men of the first abilities; his poetical character has, in every part of it, been by them so deeply explored, and so fully illustrated, and his beauties and allusions with so much taste and judgment pointed out; that it would be very difficult to make any just observation respecting him, that is not to be found among their collections and remarks. So large and valuable a body of criticism is this commentary now become, that perhaps there is no work, or series of works, that could so far contribute to form and establish a taste for antient English literature, as the notes that are at present subjoined to his Plays.

No



No general description of *Shakspeare's* dramatic powers has yet appeared, more striking or illustrative, than that by Dr. *Johnson*, in his celebrated Preface: “His characters  
“are so truly in nature, and his scenes such  
“perfect pictures of real life, that from  
“them an hermit might estimate the man-  
“ners of the world, or a confessor predict  
“the progress of the passions.”

His other remark, that “Perhaps not one  
“of *Shakspeare's* Plays, could it now be pro-  
“duced as a new work, and of a contem-  
“porary writer, would be heard to the con-  
“clusion,” may be answered by *Longinus*:  
αἱ ὑπερμεγεθεῖς φύσεις ἤκιστα καθαραὶ· ἐν δὲ  
τοῖς μεγεθεσὶν, ὥσπερ ἐν τοῖς ἀγαν πλεστοῖς,  
εἶναι τι χρεὶ καὶ παρολιγωρούμενον. *De Sublim.*  
Sect. 33.



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## BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

FROM a survey of the whole dramatic works of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, it would be difficult to draw any general conclusion, concerning their merit. So unequal are their pieces, that they admit of every degree of estimation, from excellent to bad. Their schemes are taken rather from tales, than history; though it is not always easy to discover the sources, that have supplied them. Their plots are, in general, better than either their conduct of them, or their writing: many of their chief characters are individuals: yet, among fifty-four dramas, may be found partial excellences of all sorts. What plays were written by these authors conjointly, or what by either severally, it is now impossible, beyond a very small number, to distinguish; but it cannot be supposed,



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posed, that many were written by *Beaumont*, who died (in 1615) at the age of twenty-nine, when *Fletcher* was both born ten years before him, and survived him as long.

Of all their dramas, the comedy of *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* is that, which has most deeply, and most deservedly fixed the public attention. Observing, throughout these authors, particularly *Fletcher*, to whom solely this play is attributed, a continual disposition to treat female errors with severity, it is not wonderful, that he could not resist the temptation of devoting a whole piece to the picture of a character of entire libertinism. By the words, in the second act, reported by *Estifania*, as from *Perez*,

—he is an ass not worth acquaintance,  
That cannot mould a devil to obedience—

the author seems to intend a contrast between the characters of *Perez* and *Leon*, as well in their institution, as their progress in the action of the drama; whereas *Leon* is, in truth,



truth, rather an instance that the dissimulation of one sex can exceed the penetration of the other, than that an ass can rule a vixen. The two actions of this play are conducted with very happy coincidence. It is replete with comic incidents ; all of which fall out very naturally, and justly entitle it to the high applause it has always received on the stage. In the conduct of *Margarita's* character, it is observable, at the opening of the third act, that she expresses her doubts of *Leon's* " being really master of the ignorance he " outwardly professes ;" whereas nothing, but an entire confidence in such ignorance, could introduce, with great effect, her astonishment at his breaking out, a page or two afterwards. And here may be noted the difference of the masterly pen of *Shakspeare* ; who, so far from weakening his characters by injudicious anticipations, often prefaces them, as it were, to their own greatness. In the fifth act, *Leon*, after the repeated experience of *Margarita's* treachery, is perhaps

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too easily credulous of her reformation, the moment she promises it. Mr. *Garrick* has, with great judgment, in his alteration, added a short argument between them, which strengthens the probability of *Leon's* conviction, as a ground of his faith.

*Cacafogo* very far surpasses the other buffo-character of these authors, *Bessus*, and approaches much nearer to the humour of *Falstaff*, without being so manifestly a copy of him. *Cacafogo's* avarice gives great variety to the character, whilst in him *Falstaff's* gluttony, lechery, and cowardice are well preserved. His language is excellent; and the trick, put upon him by *Estifania*, with the chain and trumpery of *Perez*, highly comic. Mr. *Garrick* altered the catastrophe of this comedy; with which alteration it now appears upon the stage. It is not easy to judge of stage effect, but upon the spot; yet there seems nothing reprehensible in the original form of it, but the unnecessarily sending of *Leon* abroad with his company,  
after



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after the scheme, for which alone his commission was obtained, is at an end : which circumstance is also preserved by Mr. *Garrick*.

*Bonduca* is a tragedy, in which the character of *Caratach* is excellently drawn. Nor is it surprizing that the authors should so well succeed in writing after the fine model *Tacitus* has left of him. *Hengo* is a very worthy élève of the manly *Caratach*. The *Druid-sacrifice* is an exhibition of solemn and striking effect. The daughters of *Bonduca*, in their threatened revenge against the Romans, they have ensnared, shew a stern and masculine spirit, well suited to themselves, their cause, and their situation.

*The Knight of the burning Pestle* is a comedy of peculiar character ; formed on Thomas Heywood's *Four Prentices* ; which was intended to ridicule the prevailing fashion of romance-reading ; and of which ridicule this play is meant as a continuation. *Cervantes* had published his *Don Quixote* in 1605 ;



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*Thomas Heywood* his play in 1612; and in 1613 was published this comedy, which is not without much humour; particularly in the relief of the prisoners from the barber-furgeon's, and the march of the knight's company through *Whitechapel*.

*The Prophetess*, a tragical history, seems a composition peculiarly happy in itself, and was well adapted to an age, in which the intervention of spirits in all the common occurrences of life was fully believed, from the king to the peasant. *Delphia* is, like *Medea*, the sublime of magick. Her power, as it were, produces the story; and the poet has managed his machinery with such excellent art, that it is no where forgotten, and no where fails to forward the plot. The images are equal to any thing to be found on the subject. The conclusion of the second act sets at work all the powers, that sustain the fable, without giving room to guess at the effects of any of their operations. *Delphia's* magic-law, "that the same affection  
" *Diocles*



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“ *Diocles* shews to *Drusilla*, shall be shewn  
“ to him by *Aurelia*,” is productive of great variety, in the progress of that part of the story; which is conducted very regularly to the end of the third act. But, like all things of great ostentation upon a false basis, which must fail somewhere, here the piece falls off, and the two last acts can scarcely be thought to have proceeded from the same pen, which produced the former.

These four pieces seem as different as any that can be selected from the volumes of these authors; to the advantage of whom many others might be pointed out, if a reader could be supposed to be interested in partial sketches of plays, not thoroughly good. Among the beauties of *Beaumont* and *Fletcher*, however, must not be omitted the scenes with *Ordella*, in the fourth act of the tragedy of *Thierry* and *Theodoret*. One passage also, in the *Humorous Lieutenant*, claims every attention. The chief characters of the play are *Antigonus*, *Seleucus*,



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*Lysimachus*, and *Ptolemy*, the successors of *Alexander*. The three last, in arms, and in opposition to *Antigonus*, are surrounded by his troops, and in imminent danger. Upon some night-alarm, that the enemy are advancing upon them, *Seleucus*, sword in hand, and disdaining to yield, breaks forth to his associates ;

Let no man fear to die : we love to sleep all ;  
And death is but the sounder sleep. All ages,  
And all hours call us ; 'tis so common, easy,  
That little children tread those paths before us.  
We are not sick, nor our souls press'd with sorrow ;

Nor go we out, like tedious tales, forgotten :  
High, high we go, and hearty to our funerals ;  
And, as the sun that sets, in blood we'll fall.

Had *Alexander*, before he joined his last battle at *Gaugamela*, spoken these words, the dignity of the personage and the occasion, suiting to the grandeur of the image in the the last line, had perhaps rendered it one of the most sublime passages poetry can furnish.



J O N S O N.

OF *Ben Jonson*, who died in 1637, though justly allowed a great scholar and perfect master of dramatic rule, there are not many pieces, among all the volumes he has left, that can be pointed out to a reader of taste, for his amusement, or approbation. As a dramatist, it seems to have been his fault, that he studied books, where he should have studied men. *Every Man in his Humour*, a comedy, in which Shakspeare used to act; the description of the battle, at the conclusion of *Catiline*; the imperfect drama of *the Sad Shepherd*, or, *Tale of Robinhood*; and *the Alchymist*, seem to form the chief mass of his poetic beauties. In the first act of the *Sad Shepherd*, the death of *Earine* is related with a fancy and assemblage of poetical images, scarcely any where equalled:



nor is this the only beauty of the piece. Yet so fatally did books associate with all combinations in *Jonson's* mind, that he has, two pages afterwards, made his shepherds read *Heliodorus*, *Achilles Tatius*, *Longus*, and other Greek romances.

Of the *Alchymist* the fame is indeed deservedly established. The course of human events affords few juster subjects for the drama, than the censure of superstitious practices and opinions, and the ridicule of popular errors. As such follies tend to the subversion of true philosophy, a pen that, like *Jonson's*, holds them up to derision, is very commendably employed in the cause of truth. Chaucer's *Chanones Yemannes Tale* had, long before, struck a hard blow at the pretenders to the philosopher's stone: which tale, it appears in *Jonson's* text, he had consulted in forming his drama. That the opinion of transmuting and multiplying metals was fixed in the general belief, at the time when *Jonson* wrote this play, is commonly known: but



J O N S O N.

but it has its merit not from that circumstance only, and as a satire of temporary application alone; it is, and will be, a satire of distinguished excellence, as long as this deep and rooted persuasion of a philosopher's stone shall any where exist. Whilst reason shall be insufficient for all the purposes of conviction to the human mind, it will perhaps be quite hopeless that superstition and vain opinions should be wholly eradicated: and, as long as the passions shall prevail against any of the cardinal constituents of virtue, avarice will follow them, or rather a greedy thirst after a source to supply their enormities. This fondness therefore for the opinion of transmutation is not likely to be the last folly, that will die; and, as long as it shall exist, the application of the *Alchymist* will remain. Of the characters, Sir *Epicure Mammon* is excellently chosen: a glutton and debauchee, whose judgment is weakened by his passions, and who thereby becomes a fit subject to be the dupe of  
*Subtle,*



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*Subtle*, and, his helpmate, *Face*. Jonson's play was first acted in the year 1610; and, four years afterwards, was performed by the scholars of *Trinity-College, Cambridge*, before the King, a comedy, entitled *Albumazar* (an astrologer): a play, of which the plot is excellently contrived, conducted with a variety of entertaining incidents, and brought to a just and perfect conclusion. The restitution of *Antonio's* goods by *Albumazar* impeaching the thieves, renders the conclusion of this piece much more perfect, than that of Jonson's *Alchymist*, where *Face* keeps his gains. It may be further observed on this play, *Albumazar*, that *Trincalo's* being put into the cellar, and, when drunk, revested with his own clothes, seems to have been taken from the *Tinker*, in Shakspeare's *Taming of the Shrew*; and to have supplied to Fletcher's *Rule a Wife and have a Wife* the incident of *Cacafogo's* being shut in the cellar. In other parts of this play, the author discovers the study of *Shakspeare*; particularly of *Hamlet* and *Othello*.

When



When *Albumazar* was revived at Oxford, Dryden wrote an occasional prologue to it, in which he says,

*Subtle* was got by our *Albumazar* ;  
That Alchymist by this Astrologer.

Whereas he might have seen, by the title-pages of the first editions of these plays, if he had no otherwise known it, that *Albumazar* was not acted till 1614, and that *the Alchymist* had been acted in 1610.



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## D R U M M O N D.

**A**MONG all the writers, at the beginning of the last century, who flourished after the death of *Shakspeare*, there is not one, whom a general reader of the English poetry of that age will regard, with so much, and so deserved attention, as *William Drummond*. He was born at *Hawthornden* in *Scotland*, in 1585, and was the son of Sir *John Drummoud*, who, for ten or twelve years, was usher, and afterwards knight of the black-rod, to *James VI*.

His family became first distinguished by the marriage of *Robert III*. whose queen was sister to *William Drummond* of *Carnock*, their ancestor; as appears by the patents of that king and *James I.*; the one calling him "our brother," the other, "our uncle."

*Drummond*



*Drummond* was educated at *Edinburgh*, where he took the degree of A. M. In 1606, he was sent by his father to study civil law, at *Bourges* in *France*; but, having no taste for the profession of a lawyer, he returned to *Hawthornden*, and there applied himself with great assiduity to classical learning and poetry.

Having proposed to marry a lady, to whom retirement and her own accomplishments had entirely attached him, and who died after the day of marriage was appointed, he again quitted his native country, and resided eight years on the Continent, chiefly at *Rome* and *Paris*.

In 1620, he married *Margaret Logan*, a grand-daughter of Sir *Robert Logan*, by whom he had several children; the eldest of whom, *William*, was knighted by *Charles II.*

He spent very little time in *England*; though he corresponded frequently with *Drayton* and *Ben Jonson*; the latter of whom had so great respect for his abilities, and so  
ardent



ardent a desire to see him, that, at the age of forty-five, he walked to *Hawthornden* to visit him.

Having been grafted, as it were, on the royal family of *Scotland*, and upheld by them, he was a steady royalist in the troubles of *Charles I.*; but does not appear ever to have armed for him. As he had always been a laborious student, and had applied himself equally to history and politics as to classical learning, his services were better rendered by occasional publications; in which he several times distinguished himself.

His attachment to that king and his cause was so strong, that, when he heard of the sentence being executed on him, he was overwhelmed with grief, and lifted his head no more.

He died in 1649.

In a survey of *Drummond's* poetry, two considerations must be had, viz.—The nation, of which he was; and the time, when he wrote. Yet will these be found, not offered



ferred to extenuate faults; but to encrease admiration. His thoughts are often, nay generally, bold and highly poetical; he follows nature; and his verses are delicately harmonious. As his poems are not easily met with, and have perhaps by many readers never been heard of, a few extracts may be excused.

On the death of *Henry Prince of Wales*, in 1612, *Drummond* wrote an elegy, entitled, *Tears on the Death of "Moeliades;"* a name, which that prince had used in all his challenges of martial sport, as the anagram of "*Miles a Deo.*" In this poem are lines, according to *Denham's* terms, as strong, as deep, as gentle, and as full, as any of his, or *Waller's*. The poet laments the fate of the prince, that he died not in some glorious cause of war: "Against the Turk, he says, "thou had'st ended thy life and the Christian war together;

Or, as brave *Bourbon*, thou had'st made old *Rome*,  
Queen of the world, thy triumph and thy tombe.

Of



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Of the lamentation of the river *Forth*,

And, as she rush'd her *Cyclades* among,  
She seem'd to plain that heav'n had done her wrong.

Further,

*Tagus* did court his love with golden streams,  
*Rhine* with her towns, fair *Seine* with all she claims;  
But ah, poor lovers! death did them betray,  
And, unsuspected, made their hopes his prey.

And concludes,

The virgins to thy tomb will garlands bear  
Of flow'rs, and with each flow'r let fall a tear.  
*Moeliades* sweet courtly nymphs deplore,  
From *Thule* to *Hydaspes'* pearly shore.

Perhaps there are no lines in *Pope*, of which  
the easy flow may be more justly admired,  
than of those in his third *Pastoral*,

Not bubbling fountains to the thirsty swain,  
Not balmy sleep to lab'ers faint with pain,  
Not show'rs to larks, or sunshine to the bee,  
Are half so charming as thy sight to me.

When



When King *James*, first after his accession to the English throne, returned to *Scotland*, in 1617, his arrival was celebrated by every effort of poetical congratulation. Upon this occasion, *Drummond* composed a panegyric, entitled *The Wandering Muses*, or, *The River of Forth Feasting*, in which are found four lines, apparently imitated by *Pope*, in the above passage, and which do not, in point of harmony, fall much short of that imitation. He says,

To virgins, flow'rs; to sunburnt earth, the rain;  
 To mariners, fair winds amidst the main;  
 Cool shades to pilgrims, whom hot glances burn,  
 Are not so pleasing as thy blest return.

Of these two poems of *Drummond*, it is observable, that the first was written in 1612; the last in 1617. The earliest piece of *Waller* is that to the King on his navy, in 1625. The piece, in which Sir John *Denham*'s greatest force lies, *Cooper's Hill*, was not written till 1640. The harmony of

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*Drummond*,



*Drummond*, therefore, at a time when those, who are usually called the first introducers of a smooth and polished versification, had not yet begun to write, is an honor to him, that should never be forgotten. Nor is his excellence half enough praised, or acknowledged.

*Drummond* and *Petrarca* had this in common, that each lamented, first the cruelty, and then the loss of his mistress: so that their *Sonnets* are alike naturally divided into two parts; those before, and those after their several mistresses deaths. It may justly be doubted that, among all the sonneteers in the English language, any one is to be preferred to *Drummond*. He has shewn, in some of these compositions, nearly the spirit of *Petrarca* himself. Of each period, one is here inserted.

From



D R U M M O N D. 51

From part 1st, before the death of *Drummond's* mistress.

*Sonn. 4.*

Aye me, and am I now the man, whose muse  
In happier times was wont to laugh at love,  
And those, who suffer'd that blind boy abuse  
The noble gifts were giv'n them from above.  
What metamorphose strange is this I prove?  
My self I scarce now find myself to be:  
And think no fable *Circe's* tyrannie,  
And all the tales are told of changed *Jove*.  
Virtue hath taught, with her philosophy,  
My mind unto a better course to move;  
Reason may chide her full, and oft reprove  
Affection's power; but what is that to me,  
Who ever think, and never think on ought  
But that bright cherubim, which thralls my  
thought?

From part 2d, after her death.

*Sonn. 1.*

Of mortal glory O soon darkned ray!  
O winged joys of man, more swift than wind!  
O fond desires, which in our fancies stray!  
O traitrous hopes, which do our judgments  
blind!



52 D R U M M O N D.

Lo, in a flash that light is gone away,  
Which dazzle did each eye, delight each mind;  
And with that fun, from whence it came, combin'd,

Now makes more radiant heavn's eternal day.  
Let beauty now bedew her cheeks with tears;  
Let widow'd music only roar and groan:  
Poor virtue, get thee wings and mount the sphears,

For dwelling place on earth for thee is none:  
Death hath thy temple raz'd, love's empire foil'd,  
The world, of honor, worth, and sweetness spoil'd.

The seventh sonnet, of the first part, has much resemblance to Sir Henry *Wotton's* elegant little poem, on the Queen of Bohemia, *Ye meaner Beauties, &c.* Among Drummond's *Flowers of Sion*, the poem, which begins, *Amidst the azure clear—Of Jordan's sacred streams*, eminently distinguishes him, whether he be considered as a philosopher, or a poet.



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D E N H A M.

SIR *John Denham* was son of one of the Barons of the Exchequer, in the reign of *James I.* He was born in 1615; took the degree of A. B. at *Oxford*; and entered of *Lincoln's Inn*, in 1634. In his youth he was much addicted to gaming; and, soon after the death of his father, in 1638, dissipated and lost nearly his whole patrimony. In the troubles of *Charles I.* he took an active part; and, when that King was in the hands of the army, was employed, first in messages and intelligence between him and the Queen, and then in managing all his domestic and foreign correspondences; the latter of which rested chiefly upon him and *Cowley*, who had retired to *France* just before the surrender of *Oxford* to the Parliament, in 1646. When the King's fate was decided, he went abroad,



and returned not till 1652. At the Restoration he was made Surveyor of the King's Buildings; and, at the ensuing coronation, Knight of the Bath.

Of the several claims of Sir *John Denham* to the regard of posterity, that of having improved our versification is the most popular. Though his title on this head be undisputed, he enjoys it in common with *Waller*, and in some measure with *Fairfax*: and *Drummond*, almost before *Denham's* Birth, had written in numbers, that stand nearly in parallel with the most harmonious lines of *Pope*. But *Denham's* fame rests not here; he gave, in the short *Preface* to his second Book of *Virgil*, the best rules for translation, that had then appeared, or that will perhaps ever appear. His *Cooper's Hill* is universally admired. The species was new: and here he stands as an original. In it the apostrophe to the *Thames* has never received too great an encomium; and is not, perhaps, at this day, any where equalled.

These



These celebrated verses however,

O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream  
My great example, as it is my theme!

Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet  
not dull;

Strong, without rage; without o'erflowing, full.

Heav'n her *Eridanus* no more shall boast;

Her fame in thine, like lesser currents, lost;

Thy nobler streams shall visit *Jove's* abodes,

To shine among the stars, and bathe the gods—

were not in the first printed edition of the poem; though the general sentiment is there.

The passage was,

O, could my verse freely and smoothly flow

As thy pure flood, heav'n should no longer know

Her old *Eridanus*; thy purer stream

Should bathe the gods, and be the poet's theme!

Among his other poems, the “ verses on  
“ *Cowley* ;” “ on Lord *Strafford* ;” and “ on  
“ *Fletcher* ;” exhibit instances of the same  
force of sense and harmony united. He has  
translated from *Homer*, *Virgil*, *Martial*, and  
*Mancini* ; but his versions are without the



spirit of his own rules, or the practice of his own example in his original pieces. His “imitation of *D’Avenant*,” and “poem on *Brother Green*,” shew great ability, in different modes of composition: and, though his tragedy, *The Sophy*, can be praised neither for much dramatic, nor poetical excellence, it still affords some proof of the versatility of his genius. Considering therefore the history of his life; how general and lasting a distraction gaming leaves on the mind; how much and how early he was employed in the public affairs; how deeply he must have partaken of the distresses of the times; and the little encouragement given to poetry, by his master, *Charles I.*; his genius must have operated very strongly against his habits, in the production of pieces so various, and some of such distinguished excellence. Whoever so far exceeds his contemporaries, as to furnish precepts for the improvement of his followers, and good models for their imitation, is intitled to the admiration and gratitude



tude of posterity, as an inventor; and his praise is reflected in every future work, produced, or influenced, by his rules, or example.

In 1668, the year in which he died, Sir John *Denham* collected and published his poems, with a Dedication to the King, well-worth perusal; and from which may be gained a good idea of the different tastes of the two *Charles's*, with respect to poetry.



W A L L E R.

*E*DMUND WALLER was born in 1605, and died in 1687. He wrote, through this long life, with nearly equal assiduity. He began in 1625, and celebrated *James II.* on the throne : a period of full sixty years. Nor do his works afford any more just cause of admiration, than the proportion of excellence, which his earliest pieces bear to those of his later studies. So perfect indeed is his versification, in his very first productions (even at the age of twenty), that it is by their dates only, they can be distinguished from any of his future compositions. In an age, when graceful poetry was, at best, but in its infancy; so rare, indeed, that an instance of it is not readily pointed out, unless in the pages of *Drummond*, or in those perhaps of *Davis* ;



*Davis* ; it is worth while to enquire, whence arose this perfect and uniform versification in *Waller*. And *Dryden* (whose Prefaces are a body of good criticism, judgment, and information) has, in the Preface to his *Fables*, left us this evidence. “ Many, besides myself, have heard our famous *Waller* own, that he derived the harmony of his numbers from the *Godfrey of Boulogne*, which was turned into English by Mr. *Fairfax*.” *Tasso* died, at *Rome*, in 1595 : in 1594 had been translated into English, and published, his five first Cantos, by R. C. Esq. and Mr. *Fairfax*’s translation of the whole work was printed, in folio, in 1600. Of this translation it is sufficient to say here, that it discovers great art of versification, being in the Italian octave, the same stanza as the original poem ; and that a passage, extracted from it, will rarely be met with, in which some harmony is not to be admired.

To exemplify what *Dryden* has said, we need not go deep into the works of *Waller* ; for  
the



the very first line in his book, in the poem,  
*To the King on his Navy*, affords an instance  
 of his study of *Fairfax*—

Where'er thy navy *spreads her canvas wings*—  
 Waller.

Thy ship, Columbus, shall *her canvas wing*  
*Spread o'er that world*—— Fairfax.

Again, in the poem, *On his Majesty's Danger*  
*(when Prince) in the Road of St. Anderes*,

*With painted oars* the youths begin to sweep  
*Neptune's smooth face, and cleave the yielding deep.*  
 Waller.

——— *with bended oars some sweep*  
*The waters smooth, and brush the buxom wave;*  
*Their breasts in funder cleave the yielding deep;*  
 Fairfax.

These passages, however, are here produced,  
 rather as a specimen of *Fairfax's* versification,  
 than to shew that it was a guide to *Waller*;  
 for, when we have his own confession of the  
 general study of this book, it is useless to  
 look for proofs of it in particular instances.

It



It may yet be remarked, that the poems of *Waller*, from which the above extracts are made, are his two earliest pieces.

*Waller* was a courtly poet; his pen always ready to celebrate, congratulate, or condole, as events happened, or occasions required; and, where interest or affection directed him, he has bestowed ample panegyric. In his circumstances, not at ease only, but possessed of an abundant fortune, by education a scholar, a poet by profession, and entire master of his time, he had both ability and leisure to read, commend, and patronize the poets, his contemporaries. But it cannot escape remark, that such was not his inclination. His general silence strongly implies, that no admiration of their excellence, no gratitude for their praises could excite him to encomium, where he suspected his readers might oppose a rivalry. To begin above his own time: Of *Chaucer* his judgment is general and erroneous, and not like that of a man, who had read and studied



died him. His object, in mentioning him, was, to compare with him to his own advantage. The praise, he gives him in one quality, he resumes immediately in another, by denying him that excellence, in which he knew his own greatest strength lay. He has borrowed the name of *Gloriana*, and a fine allusion to Prince *Arthur's* shield, from *Spenser*; but without mentioning him. Of his obligations to *Fairfax* enough has been shewn; yet he has given no word of praise, nor even acknowledgment, to his writings. *Denham*, in his *Cooper's Hill*, written in 1640, bestows a high compliment on *Waller*,

*Paul's*, the late theme of such a muse, whose flight  
Has bravely reach'd, and soar'd above thy height.

yet we find no mention of *Denham*; nor even allusion to his poems.

Of *Cowley* he is equally silent. With *Dryden* he has a few things in common. *Dryden* has over and over again praised him; and *Dryden's* was no small praise: But *Waller*  
gives



gives him not a line in return. *Milton's* great work was published twenty years before the death of *Waller*, whose very last pieces are, *Of divine Love*, and, *Of divine Poesie*; and yet he mentions neither *Milton*, nor his poem. *Milton's* earliest edition of his smaller poems had been published in the same year with the first impression of *Waller's*; 1645; but they are equally overlooked. To *Jonson* and *Fletcher* he gives the full praise of dramatic excellence; even exaggerated praise. Their best compositions were so different from any of his own, that they could stand in no degree of rivalry with him. He has praised Mr. *Sandys*, Mr. *Evelyn*, Mr. *Wase*, and Sir W. *D'Avenant*; writers, from whom he had nothing to fear.

Of the topics of *Waller's* poetry it is observable, that he has flattered the two *Charles's* and *James II.* only when living; *Cromwell*, both when living and dead; and in lines far exceeding any, that have come from his pen on any other occasion. Whilst *Crom-*  
*well*



*well* was living, these were the notes he sung  
to him, in return for the favor of recalling  
him from banishment,

Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down,  
And the state fix'd, by making him a crown :  
With ermine clad and purple, let him hold  
A royal scepter, made of Spanish gold—

For so the poem, *Upon a War with Spain*,  
concluded, in the original copy. In the  
verses on *Cromwell's* death,

—— his last breath shakes our isle.

\* \* \* \* \*

—— so *Romulus* was lost.

\* \* \* \* \*

On *Oeta's* top thus *Hercules* lay dead.

*Waller* seems to have wished for the praise  
of excellence, without submitting any where  
to the labor of revision, whereby it was to  
be obtained. Even in the *Panegyric on Crom-*  
*well*, by much the most studied and elabo-  
rate of all his pieces, are evident signs of  
this neglect. That the observation is true,  
in



in both its applications, six verses from the poem, *On the Second Duchess of York*, may evince :

Your matchless beauty gives our fancy wing;  
Your judgment *makes us careful* how we sing.  
Lines *not compos'd, as heretofore, in haste,*  
*Polish'd like marble, shall, like marble, last.*

Yet, a few lines further, we find,

So the bright sun *burns all our grass away,*  
Whilst *it means nothing but to give us day—*

than which there is not perhaps a meaner couplet in his volume. Of this neglect indolence was the foundation; and of this indolence other proof is afforded by his frequent copies of himself: nor did he always copy with the best judgment; for he has taken two complete verses from the poem, *To the King on his Navy* (and those of no trifling import, the third couplet in his book), and applied them to *Oliver*, in the poem, *On the War with Spain*.

F

To



To a peculiar phraseology, as far as a single instance, perhaps no poet ever was so addicted.

—— the glad morning, which her beams does  
throw

Upon their smiling leaves, and *gilds them so*.

Of this mode of expression he has examples almost without number. *Waller's* favorite and predominating poetical word is, *thundering*; as *Pope's* is, *murmuring*.

Of his pieces many are occasional, and declare their own dates. Of many others neither is the time easily settled, nor is it easy to account for the order, in which they stand, even in those editions published in his lifetime. Of one only, among the doubtful ones, would it be material to ascertain the date; because that date, whatever it may be, forms the epoch of *Waller's* poetical æra. The general opinion is, that the poem, *To the King on his Navy*, was written to King *James*; and the first lines appear indeed



indeed to bear some allusion to "The Peacemaker"; but the conclusion, compared with *Waller's* other pieces, seems to afford reason to believe, that it was addressed to *Charles I.* The last couplet celebrates the King for piety :

To thee, his chosen, more indulgent, he  
Dares trust *such pow'r, with so much piety.*

The poem to *Charles I. On receiving at Chapel the News of the D. of Buckingham's Death*, opens,

*So earnest with thy God, can no new care,*  
No sense of danger, interrupt thy pray'r?

In the verses to *Charles I. On the Storming of the Port of Sallée*, Morocco's monarch sends presents,

To the *renown'd for piety and force.*

The analogy between these passages would perhaps at once decide the question, if we did not elsewhere find the like qualities predicated of *Cromwell*—



The only cure, which could from heav'n come  
down,

Was *so much pow'r and piety in one* :

for so the text of *The Panegyric* stood, in the original editions. It would however be almost absurd to suppose the same line given to *James*, *Charles*, and *Oliver*. There seems yet some further reason for believing the poem written to *Charles*; for, why was *James's* navy to be celebrated? The last transaction of his reign was a feeble effort to recover the *Palatinate*; in which some miserable transports indeed were engaged, but no navy concerned. In the first year of *Charles's* reign, six ships were lent to *Louis XIII.*; a fleet fitted out against *Spain*; and a particular account of the navy required by the Parliament, and delivered by the Duke of *Buckingham*. It is obvious how much it was then a poet's business to aggrandize the naval-establishment.

As to the poem, *On the Danger his Majesty (when Prince) escaped in the Road at St. Anderes,*



*Anderes*, it appears to have been written after *Charles* was King; and the whole intent, as well as burthen of it, a compliment to the Queen, in celebrating, by retrospect, the King's early passion for her. They were not married till after *Charles* became King; and the poem seems to have other strong internal evidence of not having been written, till the crown was secure on his head.

To *Waller's* indolence in revising and correcting his pieces may be attributed, that of the five editions of his poems, printed in his lifetime, not one appears to have been published by himself. The first was published surreptitiously, whilst he was abroad, in 1645. The second, in 1664, has a bookseller's preface. And in the fifth and last, in 1686, is continued the bookseller's preface of 1664. In this mode of publication it generally happens, that an author has no choice of what shall go forth, and what be withheld: but *Waller* seems not wholly to have given up this right. In the year 1690



was published a small octavo volume, entitled, *A Second Part of Mr. Waller's Poems*; consisting wholly of pieces, never before printed, or not collected in his lifetime. As every line from *Waller's* pen must be interesting to some readers, subjoined is a small poem, which seems to have escaped as well the publishers of his days, as his admirers since. It is printed from a MS. made in the middle of the reign of *Charles I.* and before the first edition of *Waller's* poems. The MS. contains many of the original poems of *Lord Herbert of Cheshire*, *Sir John Suckling*, *Thomas Carew*, and *Waller*; and each piece is carefully distinguished by the name of its author.

*Mr. Waller,*  
*when he was*  
*at Sea.*

Whilst I was free I wrote with high conceit,  
And love and beauty rais'd above their height:  
Love, that bereaves us both of brain and heart,  
Sorrow and silence doth at once impart.

What



What hand at once can wield a sword and write?  
 Or battle paint, engaged in the fight?  
 Who will describe a storm must not be there:  
 Passion writes well, neither in love, nor fear.  
 Why on the naked boy have poets then  
 Feathers and wings bestow'd, that wants a pen?

From the last couplet, any reader of *Waller* would probably guess the author of the poem, without any further evidence. Of the assertion, in the eighth line, that "passion writes not well in love," his poem, *To Amoret*, may serve as a commentary: though his many passionate addresses to *Saccharissa* seem to prove the contrary. In this MS., the verses, *In Answer to one, who wrote against a fair Lady*, have, after the line, *Or is thy Mistress not content with one?* the following stanza, which concludes the poem—

Though *Ceres'* child could not avoid the rape  
 Of the grim god, that hurried her to hell;  
 Yet there her beauty did from slander 'scape:  
 When thou art there, she shall not speed so well.  
 The spitefull owl, whose tale detains her there,  
 Is not so blind to say she is not fair.



No stanza in *Waller's* volume seems, more than this, characteristic of his style; which is a perpetual endeavour to veil his meaning with some mythological conceit. In the MS., the poem, *To Amoret*, ends at the line, *All that's not Idolatry*, just before the couplet, in which the metre changes: and some of the other poems have remarkable, though but verbal differences from the printed copies.

Upon the whole review of *Waller*, the elegance of his diction, the equality and force of his writings, and, above all, the harmony of his numbers, rank him among the fathers of our modern and improved versification. Against the example of *Cowley*, who was a better poet, though a worse versifier, the harmonious turns of *Waller* and *Denham* first strongly operated, and their practice *Dryden* confirmed and established.





## H U D I B R A S.

**O**F *Hudibras*, the poem of *Samuel Butler*, it cannot be denied that the first and general idea is to be found in *Don Quixote*. It is the topic, there employed to ridicule a generally prevailing folly, adapted here to deride the particular politics and conduct of one party, in a local and temporary commotion. Perhaps, since the publication of *Don Quixote*, that ingenious work has not been perused by any one, in whom such activity of mind and a turn of humour, so highly satirical, have been combined, as in *Butler*: nor is it likely, that *Cervantes* ever was, like *Butler*, witness to scenes, which afforded such abundant matter for their exertion. To a genius, therefore, naturally formed to receive from it a lasting impression, such a book could not fail of giving  
some



some sort of direction, in the projection of a work, for which a ludicrous subject spontaneously offered itself; and which would probably, in some form, have appeared, had no model been produced for imitation.

Of *Butler's* plan, imperfect as we have it, no judgment can be made: he either formed none, or he deserted it. The action of the poem, as it stands, and interrupted as it is, occupies but three days: and it is certain, from the opening line,

When civil dudgeon *first* grew high,

that it was meant to bear date with the Civil-Wars. Yet, after two days and nights completed, he skips at once, in the third part, to *Oliver's* death; a space of at least fifteen years; and then returns, to retrieve his hero, and conduct him through the last Canto. Perhaps the circumstances, under which *Butler* wrote, may in some measure account for, though not excuse this incongruity. The *first Part*, in 1663, was the result of long meditation



meditation on transactions, that had crowded his mind with ludicrous images; to which his own extensive learning, wit, and observation had, at leisure, added whatever could embellish and recommend them. The *second Part*, in 1664, was precipitated, probably, by the appearance of a spurious second part, in the same year, in which *Butler* had published his first, and by the impatience, which must have been necessarily discovered in all his readers, to have a story, that was told with such abundant wit, continued. Before the *third Part* appeared, in 1678, fifteen years had elapsed, from the first publication. The subject was then grown stale: *Charles* had been many years asleep on the throne: and the sectaries had been long treated with all the indignities and derision the press could convey. Of *Butler's* perception that the "Si tempus erit" was now past, both for himself and his subject, evidence seems not only to be afforded by his not continuing his poem, according to the institution of the  
first



first and second Parts ; but by his introducing into it a subject, equally obnoxious to ridicule, and so recent as to be then before every body's eyes ; viz. The King's entire subjection to, and dotage on his mistresses ; which seems clearly intended in a part of the widow's answer to *Hudibras*.

The hero of the piece, Sir *Hudibras*, is no where to be compared. He sprung from times, that have no parallel in history, or the memory of man : and therefore it is only by consulting the spirit of those times, that his pedantry and knight errantry, his martial and civil character can be reconciled : and this character too is not a little exaggerated from the pages of romance.

The author had good topics for ridicule in the principles, the opinions, the sentiments, and the knowledge of the sectaries. Their swords had evinced both too sharp an edge, and too extensive a direction, to have their full power doubted. Yet probably he trusted, that, since they were at length sheathed or broken,



broken, the impropriety of ridiculing them would be willingly overlooked by those, who now feared them no longer; and who would be glad to retaliate, by a hearty laugh, for all the inconveniences of sequestration and exile.

The principal actions of the piece are four; viz. “*Hudibras*’ first victory, over *Crowdero*;” “*Trulla*’s over *Hudibras*;” “his second victory, over *Sidrophel*;” and “the widow’s antimasquerade.” The rest is made up of “the Adventure of the Skimmington;” and the two parallels, of “*Hudibras*’ consultations with *Sidrophel* and the lawyer,” and “long disputations with *Ralpho* and the widow.”

In a work so long, and in which are so many grotesque assemblages, it cannot be expected that all attempts should escape error. Few objections, however, are to be made. He has not been always entirely exact in his chronology; nor every where attentive to what has preceded.

In



In the first publication, 1663, *Butler* seems to have been careless how he dispensed his ridicule; bestowing it somewhat too indiscriminately, wherever a subject offered. In his amendments, in 1674, he recollected himself; and we find many sarcasms mitigated. Though the intricate webs of the theological doctors are not more intelligible than the gifted-lights of the fanatic-brethren; yet both, if they met in a common point of obscurity, were not therefore with propriety to be derided by a person, whose aim was, by exposing one establishment, to give the other advantage. This, though *Butler* appears not to have seen it at first, was doubtless pointed out to him by those, who, if not the immediate disciples of the theological-schools, were yet more nearly allied to them and their institutions, than to the innovators. And *Butler*, in many other instances, corrected, in the second impression, for the grace and decencies of his poem, as well as for consistency.

By



By his asserting of *Rinaldo*, that he “bang’d his bride into amorous fancies,” and gained her “by courting her back and sides,” it appears that he was not acquainted with the Italian poets. If not with *Ariosto*, probably not with any other. Of *Ruggiero* he might, with truth, have asserted what he has falsely told of *Rinaldo*.

In the first part, 1663, he has imitated, by excellent paraphrase, those fine lines, which stand at the beginning of *Lucan*, *Quis furor, O ciues &c?* and given them application to the memorable defeat of Sir *W. Waller*, at the *Devizes*: which elegant and correct adaptation of ancient sentiments to a modern topic, is certainly, though short, among the best imitations in our language: and it is too the first; for it was, doubtless, written before the famous *Imitation of Horace’s Satire on Lucilius*; Lord *Rocheſter* being but fifteen years old, when *Hudibras* was published: nor was Mr. *Oldham*, who with Lord *Rocheſter* is ſaid to have invented,  
with



with us, this mode of writing, born till 1653.

*Butler's* applications of irony shew the utmost force of the figure. Τα ὑψηλα ταπεινοί, or, τα ταπεινα ὑψοί, as opportunities happen, and occasions offer. The heroes of the *Ilias* are, in splendor of ancestry, below the bearward of *Paris-Garden*. The rust, which prevents the firing of a pistol, is *Pallas* perched on the spring of the lock. To elevate mean subjects, by debasing, in comparison, such as are really grand, seems the strongest character of irony.

Of beauties, of natural and proper excellence, of which several, very striking, might be produced, none seems to claim more attention than what he calls the sun, relatively to the moon ;

Mysterious veil, of brightness made,  
That's both her lustre and her shade.

Of this poem, the subject admitting almost every thing, the language is sometimes not decent,



decent, and the measure not at all exact : but it is far from probable, as has been asserted, that the author purposely disregarded the latter ; for, wherever the metre requires the production of a word to more than its usual number of syllables, he has always altered the orthography to ascertain it—*Houer*, *Fier*, *Fouer*, *Sarcasmes*, &c. &c. And it is peculiar to him to write every rhyming word universally, as it is to be pronounced correspondently with the word he has coupled with it. With respect to his rhymes, he stipulates for all advantages. In his introduction he christens *Ralph*, by that name, *Ralpho*, and *Raph* ; and the second Part he introduces, by declaring,

One line for sense, and one for rhyme,  
I think 's sufficient at one time.

a rule, of which he takes advantage, three pages afterwards, in a couplet, which has probably been passed in honest wonder by many a gentle reader ; wherein, enumerating prodigies, he says,

G

Of



Of hail stones, big as pullets eggs,  
 And *puppies whelp'd with twice two legs.*

In wit, which is liberally bestowed every where, the first part greatly exceeds the others; as it does also in the continuity of the action, and the multiplicity of incidents. In the two other parts, the long discourses and disputations interrupt the action, and fatigue attention: but, in these parts, the author's conduct seems to have failed, more than his powers to animate or embellish; for partial beauties are found throughout; allusions, that strike; images, that enliven; illustrations from the best treasures of literature.

To the copiousness of his invention, the fertility of his subject, and his failure to institute, adhere to, and complete one action, in this poem, may be attributed all those posthumous pieces and sketches of *Butler*, which have lately come to light, on nearly the like subject. But, whatever may be said of the want of unity and connection; of the  
 gross



gross familiarity of the language ; of fading allusions ; the power of time against the fictions of opinion ; or the disproportion of the parts, of which burlesque is composed ; the first part, at least, of *Hudibras* will be coëval with the language, to the memory and honor of its author. And (to adopt the thought of the late great writer of *Butler's* life) as a century ago he was in the highest fame with those, who allowed the justness of his picture, from their own comparison with the original, so it will be both the business of, and a profitable study to posterity, to gain a just idea of the same original, from his representation of it.



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W Y C H E R L E Y.

OF the four comedies of *William Wycherley*, much celebrated during the reigns of *Charles II.* and the two following kings, all the stories are domestic; the scenes, *London*: and to judge them by any other rule than that, by which they were written, would be an abuse of criticism.

Like the sovereign, under whom *Wycherley* (considering the variety of his fortune) may be said to have flourished, he appears to have yielded himself without reserve to all the ease, gallantry, and luxury of the times. Nor has he gone out of his own walk of life, or sought for other scenes, or characters, than those which his daily experience and observation might furnish. The actions of his scenes are all of the hour. His rule was that, which he has introduced in the third act of the *Country Wife*,



*Wife*, in excuse for the other poets, his contemporaries ;

Blame 'em not ; they must follow their copy, the age.

It must then be remembered that *Wycherley* wrote only to the times. All his plots have the same foundation, viz. the mistaking of one person for another : schemes, naturally induced by the then prevailing spirit of masquerading. It should likewise be remembered, that to those times the ton was given (particularly at the theatres) by the King's mistresses ; libertine mistresses ; who were probably happy in an opportunity of viewing those scenes at a theatre, which the restraint of their situation prevented their partaking, or being witnesses to elsewhere. And *Wycherley* had too, very particular reasons for following the taste both of the King and the Duchess of *Cleveland* ; to the latter of whom his first comedy, *Love in a Wood*, not the least licentious of the four, was, at her own



86 W Y C H E R L E Y.

request, dedicated. The lines, which came upon the stage from the pen of *Dryden*, in 1700, when it was a time to speak without reserve of the reign and manners of *Charles II.* may stand as the common and perpetual motto to all the loose and indecent productions of that age:

But sure a banish'd court, with lewdness fraught,  
The seeds of open vice, returning, brought.

And here let it be asked; is it not enough to distaste courts for ever with poetical adulation, to read from the pen of the same *Dryden*, addressed before to *Charles II.* personally,

Virtues unknown to these rough northern climes,  
From milder heav'ns you bring, without their  
crimes?

Through *Wycherley's* dramas, sentiment and aphorisms are very thinly scattered; for which we may take a reason from his own text, in the *Country Wife*,

Good



Good precepts are lost, when bad examples are still before us.

His dialogues in general are very easy, and his observations on common life just. Of his characters, Mr. and Mrs. *Pinchwife* are correct copies of nature; and *Varnish* and *Olivia* will always be found among the hypocrites of virtue, and the basest of mankind.

Of the *poems*, which he published in folio, in 1704, no character can well be given; they are even below criticism; as may easily be believed, when it is known that *Pope*, whose friendship and patience had bestowed some months on correcting and altering them, advised the author, as the best measure that could be adopted, to turn them into maxims, like *Rocheffoucault's*. The preface, prefixed to them, may serve as an example of the worst prose-style to be found perhaps in the English language; and the worst in such a way, as will not be believed, but upon inspection; for, throughout the



whole, though it consist of thirty pages, only five periods, including the final one, are to be observed. The greatest charity, that can now be shewn to the whole volume together, is to be silent, as to what it further contains, and to hope it obtained the object, for which the author published it; particularly as he is candid enough himself somewhere to call it, "My damn'd Miscellany."



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O T W A Y.

**O**F *Thomas Otway*, whose works are now sought with avidity, and who, with *Shakspeare* and *Rowe*, will survive in the annals of English poetry, as long as just resemblances of nature, and accurate delineations of the passions shall influence the human heart, so few particulars, towards a history of his life, are known, that what can now be collected amounts but to some trifling anecdotes, and those related upon no very certain authority. From the *Complaint of his Muse* may be gathered, that his father died, whilst he was at the university; and that he came from thence to *London*, where he spent two years in an idle and unprofitable course. In 1672, he commenced actor; but did not succeed. His earliest piece was printed in 1675, his 24th year; but, whether  
it



it had been acted before that time, does not appear. In 1676, he printed *Don Carlos*, a play of great profit to him. This success, however, attached him not to the stage; for, in 1677, he procured (as it is said by the interest of *Charles Fitz James*, Earl of *Plymouth*, a natural son of *Charles II*) a cornetcy in the cavalry, then sent into *Flanders*. The troops embarked in the end of that year; and they appear to have been disbanded, partly in August 1678, when the peace of *Nimeguen* was signed, and partly in December following. In 1678, *Otway* printed his comedy, *Friendship in Fashion*; and, that he printed this play himself, appears by the dedication. It is hence then ascertained, that he returned to *England* in the course of that year: and for his services he received, not money, but a debenture; the credit of which was made a public joke upon the stage. *Rocheſter* he now found his enemy: and his patron, the Earl of *Plymouth* was killed, soon afterwards, at *Tangier*.

From



From the time of his return, therefore, his misfortunes and distresses encreased upon him, attended him through the remainder of his short life, and terminated his days in want and famine.

In considering the works of an author, who lived without friends, and in poverty; who died through the oppression of want, at half the age of man; yet whose writings gained him the admiration of his contemporaries, and secured to him a still encreasing fame with posterity; it may not be useless to enquire, why genius, so conspicuously exerted, should have gone apparently without its reward; and why powers, that were so efficient towards celebrity, should not have led to present fortune, at least to ease and competence? That nature, when she has enlarged the faculties of the mind to a superior degree, and extended and quickened its operations, has not bestowed her best gift, no wise man will assert. And, if a necessary final cause should operate upon all exertions of genius,  
so



so as to determine them to a certain end, without any bias from prejudice or passion, error would cease, and the distinction of merit be lost. But the directions of genius are determined by other, and more accidental causes; and principally by three: by *tempers*; by *studies*; and by *habits*. Of the particular and decided influence of these, instances, amongst our own writers, readily occur. *Ben Jonson* was determined entirely by the *first* and *second*; *Dryden* entirely by the *second* and *third*; *Wycherly* by the *third*; and *Otway* by the *first* only. That *Otway's* temper governed him throughout; that it raised his genius, though it depressed his fortune, no other proof seems required, than an attention to the spirit of his letters, and to that of those characters, from which alone his celebrity, as an author, has arisen. In his *Letters*, his *Complaint*, and his *Plays*, the same man appears: and, upon the whole review, we find the *Lover*, the *Swain*, *Polydore*, *Jaffier*, and *Otway*, to be the same person:



son : nor has *Don Carlos*, in the great outline of his character, a trait of difference from these.

That men have appeared with genius and abilities, conspicuous enough for the highest fame, and powerful enough for their advancement to any point of prosperity, yet with tempers, that have perpetually opposed every effort of fortune, towards their elevation, *Otway* seems an instance in his age, as *Savage* has been in a later. *Otway* appears never to have experienced the test of “difficiliùs temperare felicitati, quâ te non putēs diù usurum” any otherwise, than by failing under the trial. He caught at the present good with avidity ; enjoyed to excess, because (though by his own choice) his happiness was of short duration ; and, when no other hope remained, he enslaved his mind with a rooted, frantic passion, that added enthusiasm to his genius, when he wrote on a subject, that bore analogy with his own feelings ; but which set at defiance  
all



all his better resolves and efforts to extricate himself from the contempt and misery, in which he passed his latest days.

Though this be the most disadvantageous view, in which we can regard him as a man, and a philosopher; as an author, it is the only just consideration, whereby to measure his works. *Don Carlos*, *The Orphan*, *Venice Preserved*, were not more the works of his head than his heart.

Of his other dramas, *Titus and Berenice* and *Scapin* are translated from the French. *Caius Marius*, taken from *Shakspeare*. *Alcibiades*, a play not only without a moral, but which he ridiculed himself in his next preface. *Friendship in Fashion*, a comedy, which, though its licentiousness pleased in *Charles the Second's* days, was hissed off the stage in 1749. *The Soldier's Fortune*, a compilation from four other tales and plays: And its sequel, the *Atheist*, a mere play of adventures, without design or character.

As



As a dramatic writer, no author, since *Shakspeare*, has copied from him so much as *Otway*; nor has any one written nearer to *Shakspeare's* style.

As an occasional writer, he has left us little, whereby to judge of him. Of his three *Prologues*, two are entire flattery to the Duke and Duchefs of *York*; and the *Pastoral-Elegy*, which he had begun, on the death of *Charles II.* and carried only as far as thirty lines, wants the first principles of that mode of writing.



L E E.

Ευφους ἢ Ποιητικη εἰν, η μανικε.

Aristot. *de Poet.*

**T**H E plays of *Lee* are in general rather histories, than tragedies: and the character of them is so distinguished, that there is no English author, to whom he can bear any degree of comparifon. He is the most original dramatic writer fince *Shakspeare*. His mind, fublime in its ideas, and extenfive and powerful in its combinations, may be called, not great only, but majestic; for of the thirteen plays, which he wrote, or in which he was concerned, the ftories of eleven are the revolutions of great ftates or empires; and the perfonages of the whole, royal, or of the higheft ftation. *Nero, Mafsiniffa* and *Scipio, Augustus, Alexander, Mithridates,*

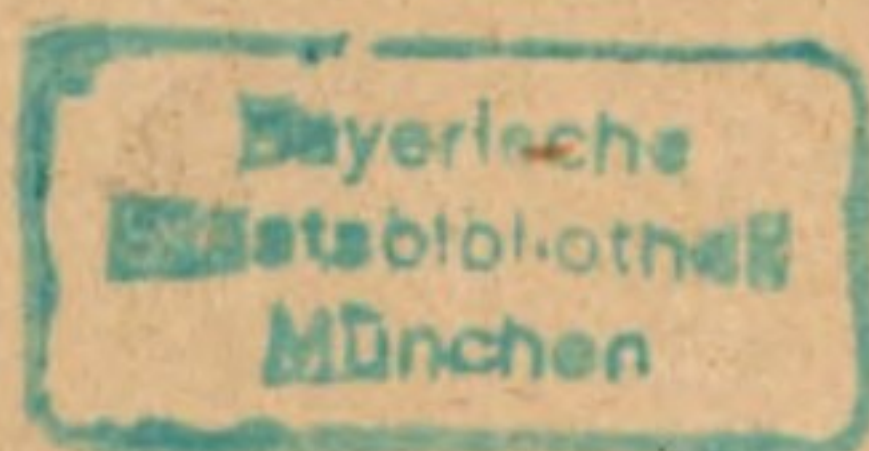


*thridates, Œdipus, Theodosius, Borgia, Brutus, Constantine, Duke of Guise, Dukes of Nemours and Cleve, and Charles IX. and Coligny,* are the heroes of his scenes. His dramas are what *Milton* calls “tragedies of stateliest” and most regal argument.” Yet it may be doubted that, with these great powers of mind, and this large view of mankind, he had much studied, or understood the true use of dramatic poetry. To the private and familiar scenes of life he has never descended: of action he neglects the unity: and, amongst all the great subjects, of which he has treated, it is perhaps true, that terror, or pity, will not be strongly impressed by any of his dramas, except *Borgia*, and the *Massacre of Paris*. His characters are faithful and striking; but the tyrants of mankind, or the champions of liberty, universally execrated, or extolled by historians, what pen cannot trace with strong lines of resemblance?

Of place he was a much stricter observer,

H

than





than either of time, or action; having never broken his scenes during an act, except in the third and fifth acts of *Mitbridates*, and then not without notice, and by scenes only, that may be dispensed with. Of time the transgressions are more and bolder. He has introduced to the same piece the deaths of *Agrippina* and *Nero*, which were at nine years distance. In *Sophonisba*, he has produced the overthrow of *Hannibal*, and the death of *Massinissa*; between which intervened fifty-two years. And in *Borgia*, as well his death as that of *Alexander VI.*; whereas the son died not, till four years after his father had been poisoned.

From *Shakspeare* he has borrowed very little; from *Otway*, though his contemporary, sometimes; yet he has himself supplied much to future writers: nor has Mr. *Addison* disdained to borrow from him the thought, with which he has opened his great tragedy, *Cato*. *Lee's* lines are,

The



The morning rises black, the low'ring sun,  
As if the dreadful bus'ness he foreknew,  
Drives heavily his fable chariot on.

*Addison's,*

The dawn is overcast, the morning lours,  
And heavily in clouds brings on the day.

in which comparison it is seen, that *Lee's* images are most striking; *Addison's* most correct.

*Lee's* earliest plays, perhaps from the prevalence of his connection with *Dryden*, are written in heroics: but rhyme was certainly not easy to him; as the frequent breaks and half-lines in his verses demonstrate: nor did he long continue the practice of it. Like all other poets, whose "daily business must be their daily bread," *Lee* seems to have offered his first thoughts, without retrospect or revision, to the public. To the claims of want the prospect of a reward is a strong impellent to hasten a conclusion: and that *Lee's* was a necessitous situation, if general



tradition did not bear testimony, we have it from the pen of *Wycherley*, his contemporary and friend. *Lee* was, during four years, (from 1684 to 1688) mad, and confined in *Bedlam*; to which state it was supposed the distress of his circumstances had chiefly given cause. Among the wretched stuff, published by *Wycherley*, in his folio, in 1704, is found an epigram, written to *Lee*, while he was in *Bedlam*; and which deserves at least to stand in a better place, than that volume. *Wycherley* had himself, probably, a fellow-feeling with *Lee*, in the purport of the lines; for his wit did not long continue a source of great plenty to him. He says,

You, but because you starv'd, went mad before;  
 Now starving does to you your wits restore:  
 So your life is, like others, much at one  
 Whether you now have any sense, or none.

Though, from this cause of poverty and haste, *Lee* have produced frequently *fumum ex fulgore*, and have much hyperbole,



bole, the mere unprojected matter of a refining mind ; yet in his pages as many sublime thoughts and images may be found, as perhaps in those of any author whatever. And, however little advantage the theatre may now derive from his compositions, the mind of a reader will ever peruse them with admiration, dwell on their beauties, and, while he contemplates the powers of a genius so extraordinary, will lament, that they should neither be to their possessor a source of immediate independence and happiness, nor applied to those labors, in which they were exerted, with the best rules for the perpetual benefit of mankind.







are intimately acquainted with the history of his life, it will be no paradox to say, that his genius was probably greater than his general works shew it to have been. It was commonly overhung with clouds, which either oppressed, or threatened him; which shadowed its fullest lustre, and obliged him to a precipitate shelter, and to offer up his first labors, and unfinished and unrevised productions to avert the storm. In one happy moment indeed it broke forth with transcendent sublimity; but, in the generality of his exertions, enslaved by habit, and constrained by necessity, he was allotted to toil without choice, and sometimes without reward.

*Dryden* seems to have been long deciding upon what was a poetical character; for he was a versifier eight years, before he introduced himself to public notice, by his *Stanzas on Cromwell's Death*; and he appears at last to have instituted it upon a principle, that carries its pretensions too high. Poetry,



n its highest character, can be but an imitation. It must imitate the truth of nature, in morals and physiology equally : and to pretend to exceed, or supplant that, is hyperbolical. If authority were wanting to confirm so evident a truth, *Aristotle*, having enumerated the different species of poetical composition, concludes, *πασαι τυγχανουσιν εσται μιμησεις το συνολον*. Yet *Dryden*, in his famous *Dramatic Essay*, tells us, “ A poet in the description of a beautiful garden, or a meadow, will please our imagination more than the place itself can our sight.” As if that, which has its excellence only from a near resemblance, could exceed its archetype. The imitative arts may indeed please us merely by a faithful representation of those objects, of which the sight would disgust us. The representation of the shambles, on the painter’s canvas, may be admired ; or that of the field of battle, as described by the poet, give us satisfaction : and here “ the description will please our  
“ ima-



“ imagination more than the object itself  
“ can our sight.” But what words shall describe the beauties of nature, above [their own power to please us? Of the subject *Dryden* has chosen, the poet cannot produce even the nearest resemblance; for the painter, or engraver, comes in between nature and him, to delight us with beauties of imitation, which certainly no words can convey. But, because he had written this in an early essay, it is not therefore to be concluded, that he always believed it. To principles, when they are erroneous, he is not uniformly constant, either in his practice, or opinion, because he has once entertained them. He has, in his latter writings, honestly and avowedly given up many of his earlier opinions, as inconsistent and untenable. Others he has virtually renounced, upon better consideration. He first tells us “ that  
“ the words of a good writer, which describe  
“ it livelily, will make a deeper impression  
“ of belief on us, than all the actor can in-  
“ sinuate



“ sinuate into us, when he seems to fall dead  
“ before us.” Yet, a few years afterwards,  
he says, “ One advantage the drama has  
“ above an heroic poem, that it represents  
“ to view, what the poem does but re-  
“ late.” He forgot, in the first instance, Ho-  
race’s *Segnius irritant animos, &c.* which he  
produces, in the last, with the fatality of  
quoting against himself. But many of *Dry-*  
*den*’s errors, in his pages, are found there,  
only because he always thought with a pen  
in his hand. His first thoughts were com-  
mitted to paper, and at once to the press;  
for he had neither time to revise, compare,  
nor refer. To keep him a little in counte-  
nance in this particular, and to shew how  
difficult it is, even to other great geniuses, to  
be always right, without reference or com-  
parison, an inadvertency (for it is no more)  
may be observed, respecting *Dryden* himself,  
in the life, written of him by the late learned  
*Biographer of the Poets*; and which had ea-  
sily been detected, with common care of re-  
vision.



vision. He tells us very gravely; "To the  
 " censure of *Collier*, whose remarks may be  
 " rather termed admonitions than criti-  
 " cisms, he made little reply; being at the  
 " age of sixty-eight, attentive to *better things*  
 " than the claps of a playhouse." Now, ex-  
 actly in that year, in which *Dryden* was  
 sixty-eight—viz. in 1699—he wrote the *Pre-*  
*face* to his *Fables*; and he therein tells us,  
 " If it shall please God to give me longer  
 " life, and moderate health, my intentions  
 " are to translate the whole *Ilias*." Such  
 were the *better things* in *Dryden's* contem-  
 plation.

His learning, upon a fair estimation, will  
 perhaps be found not to have been very  
 extensive. In the first edition of his *Dra-*  
*matic Essay*, a work wherein he certainly  
 displayed all the learning he was then mas-  
 ter of, he has twice used, *δεσις*, for the ca-  
 tastrophe of a drama; first translating it,  
*denouement*; and then, *the untying of the*  
*plot*. And in the *Preface* to his *Fables* he  
 has



has shewn, that, even after he had translated the first book of the *Ilias*, he knew not the contents of the second. But to those, who are acquainted with the poetical beauties of this author, even the mention of errors will be thought to be dwelling too long on them. He is the writer, from whom the greatest masters in his art have since taken example. And, though a partial reader may find him (from the hurry and distraction of a necessitous situation) now and then obnoxious even to vulgar censure, the great extent of his knowledge, his unbounded fertility, his careful industry in improving and establishing versification and poetical diction, his ability and will to teach, and, the crown of all, as a poet, the first example the language boasts, in the sublimest style of composition, will make every lover of English poetry, upon thorough knowledge and intimate acquaintance, end in admiring and honoring him.



M I L T O N.

A R C A D E S.

THE proper place to rank this early production of *Milton's* pen seems, as a kind of prologue to *Comus*. *Milton* went to live with his father at *Horton*, Bucks, in 1632. At *Harefield*, in the neighbourhood of *Horton*, resided the Countess Dowager of *Derby*, at whose house this piece was first performed: and *Comus* was acted, in 1634, at *Ludlow Castle*, before the Earl of *Bridge-water*, who had married a daughter of the Countess of *Derby*. This piece was “pre-  
“fented by some noble persons of the  
“Countess's family;” probably the children  
of



of the Earl of *Bridgewater*, who were by it, as a kind of dramatic exercise, initiated to the stage, and brought to perform, the next year, in *Comus*, in characters, that required greater confidence and exertion.

It has been observed, that *Milton* not only instituted this piece upon Ben Jonson's *Entertainment of the Queen and Prince at Althorpe*, but that he has servilely copied some of his words.

## J O N S O N.

Look, see;

What may all this wonder be?

\* \* \* \* \*

That is *Cyparissus*' face,  
And the dame hath *Syrinx*' grace;  
Sure they are of heav'nly race!

\* \* \* \* \*

This is she,

This is she, &c.

## M I L T O N.

Look nymphs, and shepherds look;  
What sudden blaze of majesty



Is that, which we from hence descry;  
Too divine to be mistook?

This, this is she—

\* \* \* \* \*

*Syrinx* well might wait on her.

Perhaps, upon thorough investigation, what is called servility, may be found good judgment in *Milton*. This Countess of *Derby* was daughter of the Lord *Spenser* of *Althorpe*, who had there received the Queen and Prince. She was Dowager at *Harefield*, in 1633; and *Ben Jonson's* entertainment had been performed at *Althorpe*, as the occasion of it had been given, but thirty years before. It seems therefore a very delicate compliment in *Milton*, to apply to her the words, that had, upon a former occasion, been applied to the Queen; and to remind her, by such repetition, of scenes, very flattering to her family, in receiving the Queen and Prince on their first arrival in the kingdom; and at which scenes she had herself probably been present.



## L Y C I D A S.

THIS poem appears to have been formed between *Spenser* and the early Italians. *Dryden* says, in the *Preface* to his *Fables*, “*Milton* was the poetical son of *Spenser*. He “has acknowledged to me, that *Spenser* was “his original.” *Astrophel* therefore probably gave rise to *Lycidas*. And, as *Dante* has made *Cato* of *Utica* keeper of the gates of *Purgatorio*, *Milton* has here, in return, placed *St. Peter* in company with *Apollo*, *Triton*, *Æolus*, &c. For the intrusion of what follows, respecting the clergy of his time, the earliest Italians have, in pieces of every sort, set plentiful example. Perhaps no better reason can be given for *Milton*’s conduct here, than what some commentator gives for *Dante*’s above mentioned: “Per verità è un gran “capriccio, ma in ciò segue suo stile.”

Whoever



Whoever compares this poem, towards the end, *i. e.* twenty lines from “Weep no more, woful shepherds, weep no more,” with the conclusion of the *Epitaphium Damonis*, from “Nec te Lethæo fas quæsisisse sub Orco,” will find them much alike.

A late writer's inference, “that no man could ever have read *Lycidas* with pleasure, independently of the knowledge of its author,” has somewhat of the same foundation as one of *Lauder's* replies, “that those, who inveigh against his interpolations, would themselves not scruple to commit real forgeries, did not the fear of the laws restrain them;” for neither writer could know of whom he was judging.



## I L P E N S O R O S O.

IT would be, doubtless, in the opinion of all readers, going too far to say, that *Beaumont's* song, in the *Passionate Madman*, deserves as much notice as the *Pensoreso* itself: but it so happens, that very little of the former can remain unnoticed, whenever the latter is praised.

Of that song the construction is, in the first place, to be admired. It divides into three parts. The first part displays the moral of melancholy: the second the person or figure: the third the circumstance; *i. e.* such things as encrease, or flatter the disposition. Nor is it surprizing, that *Milton* should be struck with the images and sentiments it affords; most of which are somewhere inserted in the *Pensoreso*. It will not, however, be found to have contributed much to the construction of *Milton's* poem. The subjects they severally



severally exhibit are very different: they are alike only, as shewn under the same disposition of melancholy. *Beaumont's* is the melancholy of the swain; of the mind, that contemplates nature and man, but in the grove and the cottage. *Milton's* is that of the scholar and philosopher; of the intellect, that has ranged the mazes of science; and that decides upon vanity and happiness, from large intercourse with man, and upon extensive knowledge and experience. To say, therefore, that *Milton* was indebted to *Beaumont's* song for his *Penforoso* would be absurd. That it supplied some images to his poem will be readily allowed: and that it would be difficult to find, throughout the *Penforoso*, amidst all its variety, any more striking, than what *Beaumont's* second stanza affords, may also be granted.

*Milton's* poem is among those happy works of genius, which leave a reader no choice how his mind shall be affected.



IN Milton's *Latin Poems* pure diction and harmonious versification are every where observable. The *Elegies* have a perfectly classical elegance. Perhaps no scholar could succeed in forming a happy elegiac stile, without the study of *Ovid*. Of such study these poems afford much proof.

Nunc ego *Triptolemi* cuperem conscendere currus,  
Misit in ignotam qui rude semen humum :  
Nunc ego *Medeæ* vellem frænare dracones,  
Quos habuit fugiens arce, *Corinthe*, tuâ.  
*Ov. Trist. l. iii. el. 8.*

At tu, si poteris, celeres tibi sume jugales,  
Vecta quibus *Colchis* fugit ab ore viri ;  
Aut queis *Triptolemus* Scythicas devenit in oras,  
Gratus Eleusinâ missus ab urbe puer.  
*Milt. el. 4.*

Prefferat occiduus Tartessia littora *Phæbus*.  
*Ov. Met. l. xiv.*

Et Tartessiaco submerferat æquore currum  
*Phæbus*—— *Milt. el. 3.*

Semi-



Semicaperque Deus, semideusque caper,

*Milt.* el. 5,

is from well-known lines of *Ovid*, Art. Am. l. ii. 24; and Fast. l. iv. 752. Many other like passages might be pointed out. Nor are these favors received, without grateful return to the Roman poet.

Non ego vel profugi nomen, fortemve recuso;  
Lætus et exilii conditione fruor.

O utinam vates nunquam graviora tulisset

Ille Tomitano flebilis exul agro!

Non tunc Ionio quicquam cessisset *Homero*,

Neve foret victo laus tibi prima, *Maro*.

El. i.

No part of *Milton's* writings contain so full account of himself, as his Latin poems: nor are any where found so many embryo-passages of his greater works.



*M*ILTON's six *Italian Poems* shew a very extensive skill in that language; and highly deserve the elaborate praise *Francini* has bestowed on them in his *Ode*, where he says, with much grace,

Dammi tua dolce cetra  
Se vuoi ch'io dica del tuo dolce canto.

The second *Sonnet*,

Qual in colle aspro al imbrunir di sera,  
&c.

has great delicacy, both of sentiment and expression. It is without weakness, and without hyperbole: a medium, which seems Italian perfection. In the *Canzone* is one of the most elegant forms, used in the language;

*Dinne*, se la tua speme sia mai vana,  
E de pensieri lo miglior t'arrivi;

a mode used by the earliest, and the best Italians;



*Se la vostra memoria non s'imboli*

*Ditemi.*

Dante, *Inf.* c. 29.

*Hor dimmi, se colui in pace vi guide,*

Petrarca, del *Tr. d'Am.* c. 2.

and is one of the many beauties, they have borrowed from the Latins. As *Horace*, l. i. od. 3,

*Sic te, Diva potens Cypri,*

\* \* \* \*

*Ventorumque regat pater*

\* \* \* \*

*Navis, \* \* \**

\* Virgilium \* \*

*Reddas incolumem, &c.*

Even in such trifles as Italian *Sonnets*, it is easy to discover the man, and the scale of mind, that was composing them. It is not here, as with *Petrarca*,

Regnano i sensi, e la ragion è morta;

but

Ne treccie d'oro, ne guancia vermiglia

M'abbaglian sì, ma . .



Portamenti alti honesti—  
Parole adorne di lingua più d'una,  
E'l cantar, che di mezzo l'hemispero  
Traviar ben puo la faticosa luna.

Son. 3.



MILTON's language, both in prose and verse, is so peculiarly his own, that the style of no former, or contemporary writer bears any resemblance to it. From his phraseology the idiom of no learned, or foreign language is excluded. To a reader, unacquainted with the foreign and ancient-English languages, and incapable of tracing words to their parent root in the learned, the sense and spirit of *Milton's* phrase must be often unattainable. To ostentation, to a desire of frequently displaying the acquirements of study, has this copiousness of learning been by some attributed. Perhaps a more liberal and more just cause may be assigned. *Milton* was, till his thirtieth year, a laborious and uninterrupted student. When he engaged himself in the business of the world, still his occupation was learning. His familiarity with all languages is generally known: and nothing is so common an effect



effect of perfection in, and intimate use of a language, as thinking in, and expressing the thoughts by the idiom of that language. In *Dryden's* English we find Latinisms allowed and admired; and, if *Milton* was a better scholar in all languages, than *Dryden* in Latin, the idioms of all were in common to him. Bishop *Atterbury*, an excellent judge in every part of polite literature, censures *Waller* for his total want of Grecisms, and for his few Latinisms, and infers from thence very slender scholarship. If *Atterbury's* rule be just, judge all your poets by the same rule; and let not *Milton*, who abounds with learned allusions; whose text perpetually reminds us of the Greek writers, and who has epithets and phrases without end from *Horace* and *Virgil*, and almost all the poetical turns either language could afford to his own; let not him, thus qualified and thus excelling, be blamed for what would have been praised in *Waller*, or any other poet.

The great extent of poetical imagery, allusion,



lusion, and description in the *Paradise Lost*, necessarily led its author to extensive dealings with the Greek and Roman epics, and transferred much of their readings and idiom from those languages to his own: but, of all modern languages, the peculiar favorite of *Milton's* study was *Italian*. No part of his works is exempt from notices of this predilection. Wherever he has a choice, the Italian derivation is preferred. He has *souvan*, *ammiral*, *barald*, *perfet*, *tempest*, v. &c. &c. &c. And it is, perhaps, not difficult to account for this preference. Whoever is acquainted with the Italian and Greek languages, will find a strong analogy between them; and such a force in many of the Italian words, as brings the resemblance nearest, even in those very parts, where the greatest strength of the Greek lies. If the Greeks have *αποδημος*, the Italians have *fuoruscito*. When the Greek indeed rises to *φιλαποδημος*, the Italian is left; and at some point must every language be left by it; for with it, to  
the



the full extent of the composite words, none other can compare. The force of a Greek composite can never be better shewn, than by the text of *Milton*, who in his *Masque* has taken a full line and half to render one word, used by *Homer* :

———what time the labor'd ox

In his loose traces from the furrow came—

is all expressed by βελυτος. But the Italians, though far short of this force, have still composite words of sufficient power to make every lover of Greek love Italian. And, that *Milton's* attachment to it arose from this affinity, seems probable, because his taste for it was greatly antecedent to his visiting *Italy* ; and the kind and flattering reception, he met with there, was the consequence, not the cause of his great proficiency in it. His fondness for music too might have some influence in favour of a language, so well adapted to musical expression.

It



It has been observed of *Milton*, “that he  
 “very often imitates *Scripture*, where he is  
 “thought most to follow a classic original.”  
 A like observation may be made on his Ita-  
 lian Imitations; for he has often followed  
 the poets of that language, where classic au-  
 thors are referred to. In the note on *Par.*  
*Reg.* b. iii. l. 310, varior. edit.

He look'd, and saw *what numbers numberless*  
 The city gates outpour'd, light-armed troops;

*Æschylus* is referred to: whereas *Milton*  
 took both the expression and much of the  
 sentiment from *Tasso*, *La Ger.* c. xix.  
 st. 121:

Ma non aspettar già che di quell' oste  
 L' innumerabil numero ti conti.

Several other instances of this sort might be  
 pointed out. Another note, or two, may  
 here be added. In the *Allegro*,

Warble his native *woodnotes wild*,  
 is *Tasso's*

*boscarecce*



*boſcarecce inculte avene.*

La Ger. c. vii. ft. 6.

In *Par. Loſt*, var. edit. b. ii. at l. 124,

When he, who moſt excels in *fact of arms*;

a change is propoſed to, *faëts*, or *feats*. The text is a ſimple Gallicism; *en fait d' armes*; as, *maitre en fait d' armes*. Same book, l. 185,

*Unreſpited, unpitied, unrepriev'd,*

is from *Shakſpeare's*

*Unhoſel'd, unappointed, unaneal'd.*

Ghost, in *Hamlet*.

This ſeems the moſt obvious alluſion poſſible. No line, or paſſage in *Shakſpeare* appears to have made ſo deep impreſſion on *Milton's* imagination, as this: he has fourteen or fifteen imitations of it. Yet, the notes refer only to the Greek tragedies in general. —The paſſage in *Par. Loſt*, b. x. l. 296,

——the reſt his look

*Bound with Gorgonian rigor not to move,*

*And*



*And with Asphaltic slime; broad as the gate,  
Deep to the roots of hell the gather'd beach  
They fasten'd——*

has no small difficulty. This is the punctuation of both *Milton's* editions. About such substances and such operations it is vain to reason too physically. Perhaps some help towards an interpretation may be gained from the phraseology of *Tacitus*; who frequently couples, under the same verb, a moral subject and a material :

Comitabantur exercitum, præter alia assueta bello, magna vis camelorum, onusta frumento, ut simul hostem famemque depelleret.

Ann. l. xv.

Germania omnis a Sarmatis Dacisque mutuo metu aut montibus separatur.

De Mor. Germ.

—— prædâ famâque onusti. Ann. l. xii.

and in many other like instances. The modern editions alter the punctuation, by placing the semicolon at *move*; and only a comma



comma at *slime*. In *Comus*, l. 380, *all to-ruffled*, the original reading of both *Milton's* editions, should be restored to the text, instead of the words now found there. This is a mode of expression very frequent in *Chaucer*, as, in the *Monkes Tale*,

she wold kille

Leons, lepards, and beres *al to-rent*,

i. e. *rent bears entirely to pieces*.

To metre and accent, of which many readers affect to perceive so much grace and harmony in the verse of *Milton*, he appears to have been, in general, very little attentive. Among his blank heroics are found both rhyming couplets and alexandrines. That no passages appear, throughout his books, where the position of the words, or the accents have been studied, can with no more truth be asserted, than that the generality of his verses discover marks of care. Wherever the image was to be illustrated by a pause,

Dire



Dire was the tossing, deep the groans, Despair  
 Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch;  
 And over them triumphant Death his dart  
 Shook——but delay'd to strike.

or by an accent,

Gambol'd before them; th' *unwieldy* elephant.

or by a burthen of the verse,

Created *hugest*, that swims th' ocean stream.

In such cases his care was bestowed with a success, that few poets before him, except *Homer* and *Ariosto*, have equalled. In other cases he committed himself to his reader, upon his general dignity of sentiment and boldness of expression, frequently the result of such liberty of writing. The most striking character of his poetical style is formed by the turn of words,

*Glory to him*, whose just avenging ire  
 Had driven out th' ungodly from his sight  
 And th' habitations of the just; *to him*  
*Glory and praise——* *Par. Lost*, b. vii.

Serpit



Serpit odoriferas per opes levis *aura* Favoni,  
*Aura* sub innumeris humida nata rosis.

Eleg. 3.

With these both his English and Latin poems abound. The 114th *Psalms*, which he has rendered both into English and Greek paraphrase, (of which the English was done by him at fifteen years old) appears to have attracted his notice, by a particularly beautiful turn of lines found in it. Yet *Dryden* says, in his *Dedication of Juvenal*, “ Had I  
 “ time I could enlarge on the beautiful turns  
 “ of words and thoughts, which are as re-  
 “ quisite in satire, as in heroic poetry. With  
 “ these beautiful turns I confess myself to  
 “ have been unacquainted, till in a con-  
 “ versation, which I had with Sir George  
 “ *Mackenzey*, he asked me why I did not  
 “ imitate, in my verses, the turns of Mr.  
 “ *Waller* and Sir John *Denham*; of which  
 “ he repeated to me many. This hint, thus  
 “ seasonably given me, first made me sen-  
 “ sible of my own wants, and brought me  
 “ after-



“ afterwards to seek for the supply of them  
 “ in other English authors. I looked over  
 “ first the darling of my youth, the famous  
 “ *Cowley*; there I found, instead of them,  
 “ points of wit and quirks of epigram, even  
 “ in the *Davideis*. Then I consulted a  
 “ greater genius, I mean *Milton*; but I  
 “ found not there neither, that for which I  
 “ looked.” And, to ascertain his meaning,  
 he concludes with examples from *Ovid*:

Heu quantum scelus est in *viscera viscera* condi!

and from *Catullus*:

Tum jam *nulla* viro juranti *fœmina* credat;  
*Nulla* viri speret sermones esse fideles:  
 Nam, simul ac cupidæ mentis satiata libido est,  
*Dicta nihil* metuere, *nihil* perjuria curant.

*Dryden* used occasionally to visit *Milton*, who had expressed an opinion, not very favorable to him, as a poet; though he allowed him to be a rhymist. *Dryden* might be piqued at this opinion: he, more probably, believed what he wrote. With his usual haste he



took up *Milton's* book, looked over a page or two, and, not finding there any turn of words, formed a general conclusion. His censure, however, seems to demonstrate, that he was, at least when he wrote this, in 1693, but a casual reader of *Milton*. And so erroneous is his opinion, that it may be doubted, even after all his study for examples, whether the ten thousand verses, which he delivered to *Tonson*, during the several succeeding years, contain as many turns of words, as the *Paradise Lost* alone, which consists of very few more lines.



OF *Milton's* fame with posterity the measure is not yet full. That learning, science, and truth are impeded by the necessary distractions of life, and by the errors and variety of opinions, which the different limitations in the progress of our search and studies occasion, will not be more readily allowed, than that consummate knowledge itself is not alone sufficient for the establishment of truth; and that prejudice and malignity, with the highest talents, may render interpretations doubtful, or obscure facts, as certainly as ignorance, or the clouds of error.

It has been *Milton's* fate, after a long interval of neglect and silence to his writings, to be at length brought forth and expounded by commentators of excellent taste, judgment, and erudition; by *Hume*, by *Addison*, *Thyer*, *Richardson*, and *Newton*: and, after the example of such



men, illustrious some by their station, and all by their learning, a just life, at least a just history of the poetical character of *Milton*, had come with some grace from the late author of the *Lives of the Poets*. Yet, when to honor the greatest poet our annals can boast, these wreaths are gathered, the hymns composed, the altar prepared, and but the torch wanting for his apotheosis, like his own *Belial*,

——whose tongue

Dropt manna, and could make the worse appear

The better reason, to perplex and dash

Maturest counsels——

comes this avowed enemy, to forbid the rites, and oppose the claim.—Of *Johnson*, from his great abilities, and his peculiar talent in biography, it will probably be the fate, for many years, to be the last writer of a life of *Milton*: yet let every reader in the mean time remember, that prejudice, envy, nay malignity, have, throughout this work, even extinguished the candor of its author: in  
all



all cases determined his will against his subject, and in some misled his judgment. He charges *Milton* with vanity, in having prefixed to his juvenile Latin poems, the age, at which they were severally written. That *Milton* did so, is certainly in itself a proof of his modesty; “take my poems and their apology with them.” To construe such addition of his age a boast, you must at least allow them to have (what is true) extraordinary excellence; and then Envy’s construction will be, “at such an age I could make such poems.” But, how illiberal it is to turn merit against itself, or make virtue in any way shadow its own fame, may be judged of, without that great writer’s abilities; and will be allowed, without his prejudices. In the review of the Italian Poems, his conduct is scarcely secure from ridicule. “Of *Milton*’s Italian Poems he cannot pretend to speak as a critic;” yet of every stanza of *Francini*’s Italian Ode, in commendation of them, he judges. The truth is,



that, finding in *Milton's* Italian Poems nothing to dispraise, he would still forbear to commend them, elegant as they are in themselves, and the single instance of an English poet's exercise in that language. When their perfection stood the test of his own examination, still they were to be envied the just praise, they had received from others; and he has fallen upon those very Italians themselves, who have celebrated them. But with how much taste and judgment he has done this, may easily be seen. His chief criticisms on *Francini's* Ode are, "that the first stanza is only empty noise," and "that the last is natural and beautiful." With respect to the first remark; whoever has passed, without admiring it, *Tasso's* invocation, in his second stanza, (of which this first stanza of *Francini* is a very elegant paraphrase), has probably found no one beauty to admire, throughout the whole *Gerusalemme*. With respect to the second remark; if *Carlo Dati* may be allowed a judge of just sentiment,



sentiment, and poetical expression in Italian, the last stanza of *Francini's* Ode is not "natural and beautiful;" he having himself ridiculed it, in his Latin *Encomiastic-Inscription*, subjoined to that *ode*: for, where he says, "Illi, in cujus virtutibus evulgandis  
 "ora famæ non sufficient; *nec hominum stu-*  
 "por in laudandis satis est," he can only allude to *Francini's* conclusion,

Freno dunque la lingua, e ascolto il core,  
 Che ti prende a lodar con lo stupore.

It is also called pride in *Milton* to have printed, before his poems, the Italian testimonies in his favor. At the head of them is found a distich of *Manfo*, Marchese di *Villa*, a man by birth, by letters, by military fame, fortune, and his patronage of scholars, among the most illustrious of his country, or his age. Could *Milton* then, who had received every civility and kindness from this man at *Naples*, consistently with humanity, good breeding, or any right  
 of



of society, omit to print his distich, in a work published even in his lifetime, and which contained a long poem, purposely composed and presented personally to him by *Milton*, on his leaving *Naples*, in gratitude for the favors received there? If it were necessary that *Manfo's* testimony should appear, of course the others were required: and they are put forth with as much modesty, as could well be expressed concerning them, by a declaration, “non tam de se quam supra se esse dicta.” *Milton's* biographer has in these, and various other instances, forgotten (though he have elsewhere praised it) the best rule in Pope's *Essay on Criticism*,

Learn then what morals critics ought to show;  
For 'tis but half a judge's task to know.  
'Tis not enough, wit, art, and learning join;  
In all you speak let truth and candor shine.

Of this Marchese *Manfo* it was the singular fate to be the common patron of both *Tasso* and



and *Milton*, though at the distance of forty-three years; for *Tasso* died in 1595, and *Milton* was not in *Italy* till 1638. The former poet celebrates his splendor and liberality:

Fra 'cavalier magnanimi, e cortesi,  
Risplende il *Manfo*; e doni, e raggi ei versa.

*La Ger. Conq.* c. xx. ed. 1593.

the latter his taste and patronage of the Muses:

Dicetur tum sponte tuos habitasse penates  
*Cynthius*, et famulas venisse ad limina musas.

*Carm. ad Mansum.*

a couplet, which may, not unaptly, be applied to *Pope*.

Of the several commentators on *Milton*, Mr. *Richardson* and Mr. *Thyer* are the most conspicuous for the allusions: the former for the classical; the latter for the Italian. For the design of the poem, the conduct, and the manners, Mr. *Addison*; who points out, with great propriety, the consistency in  
the



the characters: a consistency, which is much and justly admired in *Tasso*; for which he is praised by every discerning reader, and celebrated by that fine judge of epic and dramatic excellence, *Metastasio*; who calls him “dipintore fidelissimo de’ caratteri veri e costanti.” This propriety in the Italian could not escape the observation of *Milton*, who had studied every line of *Tasso*, and whose poem has much in common with the *Gerusalemme*. The commendation of *Tasso*, however, in this particular, must not detract from *Milton*. The utmost he could derive from the example before him, was a notice, that the best critics would admire him, if he should adhere to the same consistency: and well rewarded has his care been in so good a judge of the decorum of character, as Mr. *Addison*, to point out his beauties.



Θεοπεμπτα τινα δωρηματα (ε γαρ ειπειν θε-  
μιλον ανθρωπινα) αθροα ες εαυτον εσπασε· δια-  
τυστο οις εχει καλοις απαντας αει νικα.

*Longinus de Sublim. sect. 34.*

THE genius of *Milton*, the contempla-  
tions, the powers of intellect in inven-  
tion and combination, are above example, or  
comparison. In proportion to the terror ex-  
cited by the sublimity of his design, is the  
delight received by his wonderful execution.  
His subject, and his conduct of it, exalt him  
to a supreme rank ; to a rank, with which  
all other poets compare but as a second  
class. *Homer's* intercourse with the gods is  
when they descend, as *Satan* entered *Para-*  
*dise*, in mists and clouds to the earth. *Shak-*  
*speare*, though the first scholar in the vo-  
lume of mankind, rises “ above the wheel-  
ing poles,” but in glances and flashes of  
sublimity. *Tasso* up to the heavens “ pre-  
fumes ;”



fumes ;” but *Milton* “ into the heaven of heavens,” and dwells there. He inhabits, as it were, the court of the Deity : and leaves on your mind a stability and a permanent character of divine inhabitation and divine presence, of which no other poet gives you a thought. Others rise to sublimity, when they exceed ; *Milton’s* institution, his quality, his element is sublimity : from his height he descends to meet the greatness of others.

Mr. *Addison* has remarked, that “ perhaps never was a genius so strengthened “ by learning, as *Milton’s*.” So true is this, that years might be spent in the examination of the *Paradise Lost*, without exhausting all its topics of allusion to ancient and modern learning. Yet the constitution of *Milton’s* genius ; his creative powers ; the excursions of his imagination to regions, untraced by human pen, unexplored by human thought, were gifts of nature, not effects of learning. Had his studies, by any fatality, been confined to an English version of the sacred  
Books,



Books, *Paradise Lost* had equally come forth, though with less ornament.

By this view of the genius of *Milton* may be decided the question, Whether *Shakspeare's* powers would have been enlarged, or altered by learning? *Shakspeare*, as *Dryden* happily expresses himself, “was naturally learned.” His learning was above the study of books; and by them he might, like *Milton*, have illustrated nature; have given variety to narration, or energy to allusion; but never have improved, through the knowledge of others, that first knowledge, which was peculiarly his own.

But the learning of *Milton*, though not the first subject of our admiration, is not to be passed over, without a degree of praise, to which perhaps no other scholar is entitled. To both the dialects of *Hebrew* he added the *Greek*, *Latin*, *Italian*, *French*, and *Spanish*; and these he possessed, not with study only, but commanded them in ordinary and familiar use. With these, aiding his own  
natural



natural genius, he assumed a vigor of intellect, to which difficulties were temptations; that courted all that is arduous: that soared to divine counsels, without unworthiness; and met the majesty of heaven, without amazement or confusion.

The energy of his mind, upon all occasions, shews itself such, that we make no allowances (because we find none necessary) for his situation. Yet the greatest work of human genius, his *Paradise Lost*, was not begun till he was blind. Had any one, possessing all the faculties of man without impair, executed this work, who would not say he had written with all nature present to his mind; that is, within the power of his mind, by help of that reference or revision, which connects science and retrieves learning? But of *Milton*,

——from the chearful ways of men  
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair  
Presented with an universal blank  
Of nature's works, to him expung'd and raz'd,  
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out—

more



more must be said: he wrote with all nature present to his memory.

That the praise of *Milton* is, like that of *Cowley*, to have no thought in common with any author, his predecessor, cannot be urged. Though he thought for himself, he had a just deference for the thoughts of others; and, though his genius enabled him without helps to execute, he disdained not to consult and direct himself by the most approved examples. In his Latin elegies, *Ovid* was his master: in his first essay in masque, *Ben Jonson*: in his Italian poems, *Dante*, *Petrarca*, and *Fulvio Testi*. It was his peculiar study to explore the traces of genius, in whatever authors had gone with eminence before him. He read them all. He took the golden ornaments from the hands of the best artists; he considered their fashion, their workmanship, their weight, their alloy; and, storing and arranging them for occasion, he adapted them, as he saw fit, to the chalice, or the pixis, formed from

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the



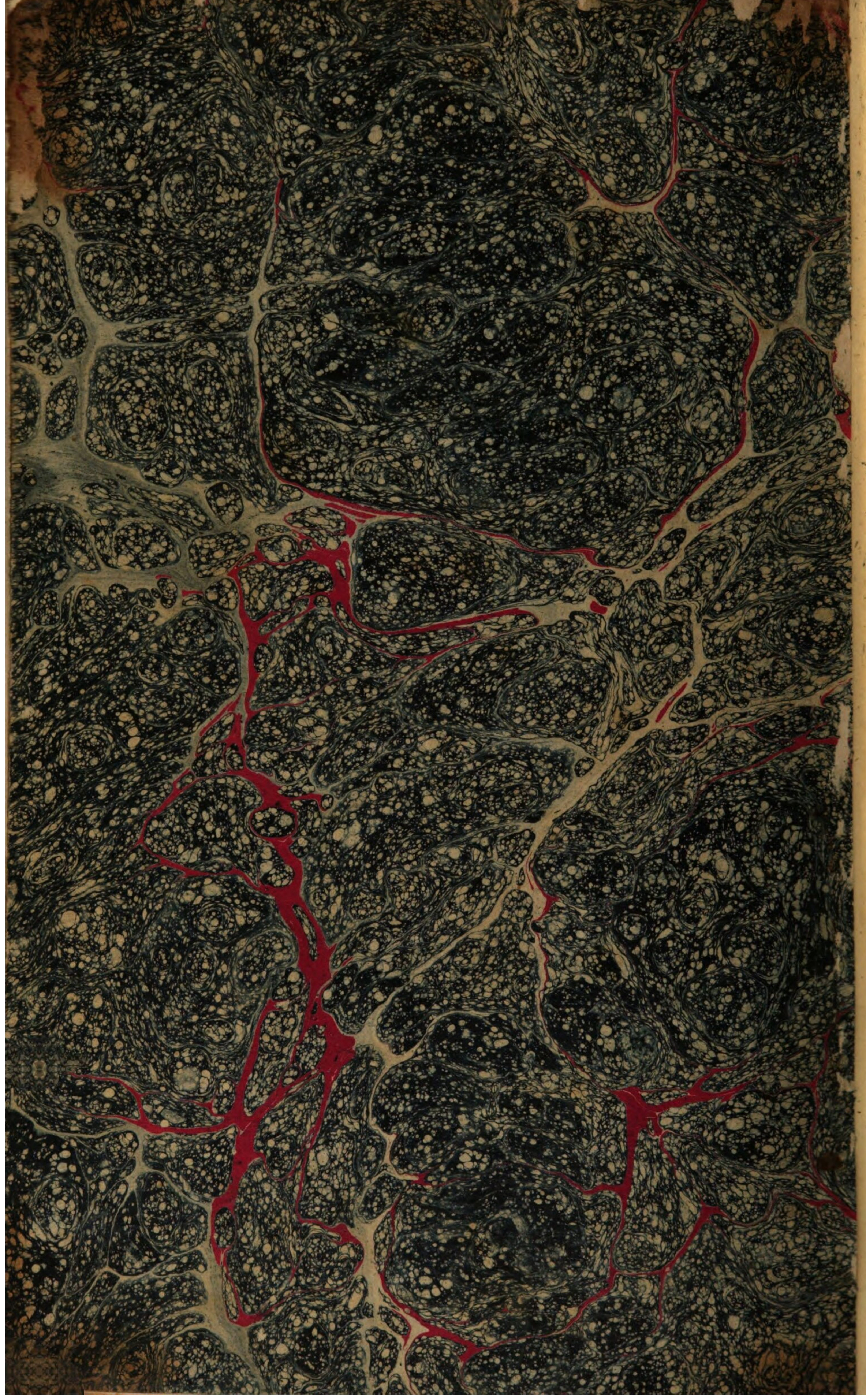
the sublime patterns of his own mind. Works of exquisite and wonderful invention; which the most learned and the most ingenious are the first to admire; but which themselves can never be imitated! To form the *Paradise Lost*, what learning have the *sacred*, or the *classic* books, that has not been explored? And what are the beauties, or the excellences of either, that he has not there assembled and combined? 'Tis a temple, constructed to his own immortal fame, of the cedar of *Lebanon*, the gold of *Ophir*, and the marble of *Paros*.



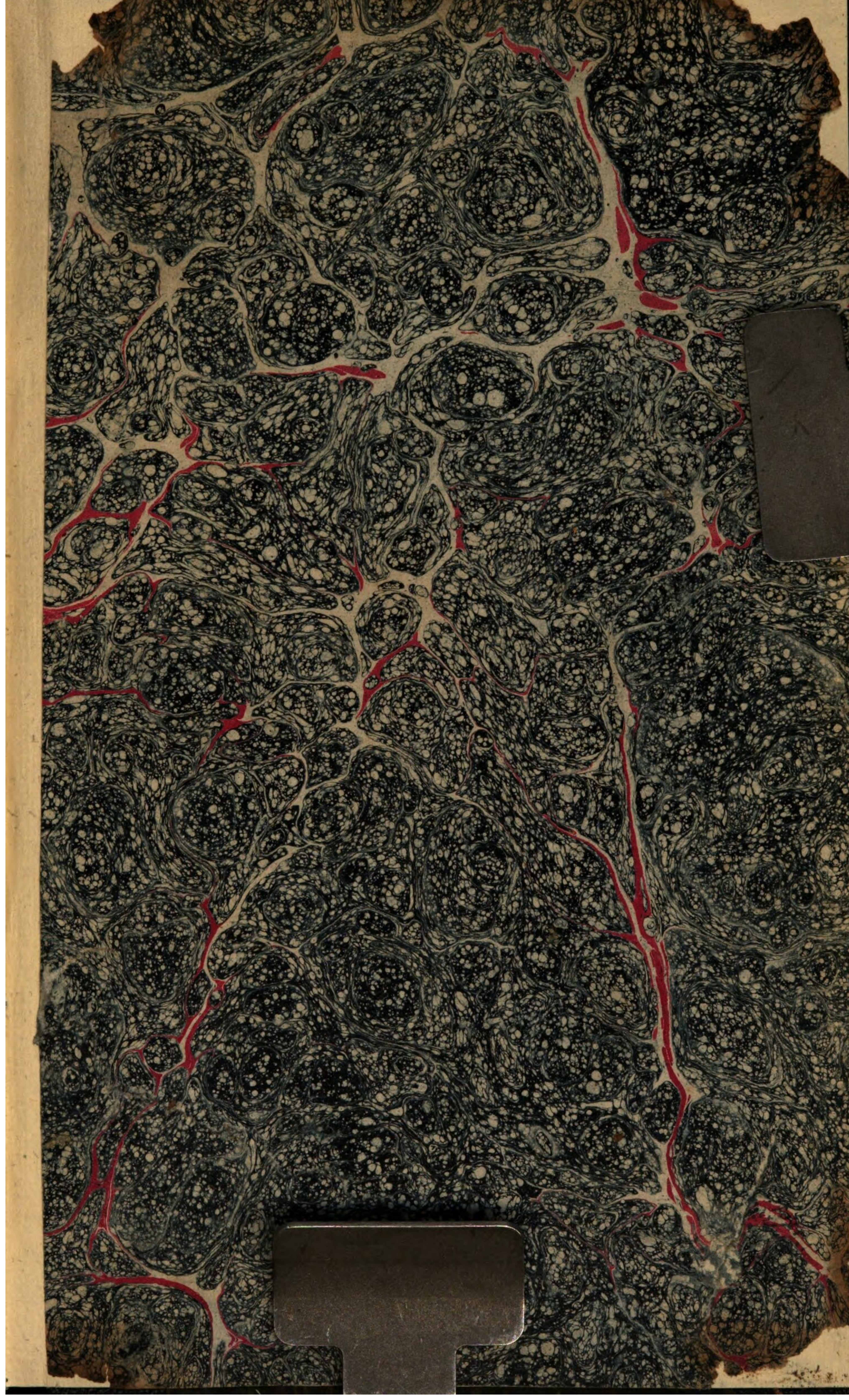


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Neve, Philip

Cursory Remarks on some of the ancient English poets, particularly Milton

London 1789

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